Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation

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Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation

A Study of Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql

By

Carl Sharif El-Tobgui

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This book is dedicated,
with boundless love and eternal gratitude,
to my dear wife, Nadia,
and my beloved children,
Adnane and Amina

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Mise en Scène

It is the turn of the year 1300. The city of Damascus is filled with a heavy sense of foreboding. Where once the vibrant lights of civilization shone forth to illuminate the surrounding lands, a decidedly somber atmosphere now hung thickly over the deserted marketplaces and alleyways. Most of the city's inhabitants had already fled in horror before the impending cataclysm. The governors and intellectual elite had abandoned camp en masse as well, following their terrified populace south into Palestine, then farther down into Egypt, whose perpetually sunny skies had not yet been darkened by the chilly shadow cast by the gathering menace to the north. The land of Syria was under existential threat. Nowhere in the annals of the ancient metropolis had a more fateful day been recorded; for, perched along the northeast border of the city, ready to swoop down like a pack of vultures at the slightest nod from their redoubtable chief, camped the fearsome hordes of the sons of Genghis Khan.

Some time later, in the dungeon of the citadel at Cairo, quite another battle was being waged. Having been sentenced to one and a half years in prison for propagating allegedly anthropomorphic ideas regarding the nature of God, an energetic, bold, and innately combative scholar and man of religion by the name of Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) scarcely seemed fazed by the fact that he was locked behind bars. As long as the prison wards continued to supply him with reams of paper and an ever fresh supply of ink and pens, Ibn Taymiyya could continue to fight a battle infinitely more consequential than the struggle against the Mongols in Syria; for if Damascus, one of the first of the illustrious external citadels of Islam, were to fall to hostile forces, then much was lost indeed. But if the internal citadel of faith itself were overrun, then *all* was lost, for the stakes here were nothing less than ultimate.

The lines had been drawn long before Ibn Taymiyya's day. Nearly seven centuries had passed since the Prophet of Islam had brought to a chaotic world God's final message to mankind—a revealed Book whose very words were those of God Himself. The message, in its early days, had been clear and pristine. God was al-Ḥaqq, the Ultimate Reality, or the Ultimately Real. He was also al-Khāliq, the Creator of the heavens and earth and of everything they contained. God had also created man and had placed him on the earth to worship his Lord and to work good deeds for as long as he might tarry. Man, inexorably, would one day taste of death, whereafter God would raise him up again, body and soul, to judge him for the sincerity of his faith and the goodness of his works. So was it revealed to them in the Book, and so did they believe in it—with their hearts as well as with their minds.

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Yet over the centuries, the clear and unencumbered plains of God's Holy Word had slowly but steadily been encroached upon from beyond the horizon, and foreign troops had come to occupy many a Muslim thinker's mind. The mass translation of Greek and Hellenistic medical, scientific—but especially philosophical—texts into Arabic from the time of the Abbasid caliph al-Maʾmūn in the early third/ninth century onward brought a host of new and strange ideas and modes of thinking into the Muslim intellectual landscape. The works on logic, metaphysics, and other disciplines by Aristotle and various Neoplatonic thinkers fascinated and enticed, yet also discomforted and repelled; for here was a sophisticated, brilliantly exposited view of the world, carefully elaborated over the course of centuries by some of the most brilliant minds the world had ever known. Provocatively, it was a view of the world, a vision of reality, that pretended to far-reaching coherence and comprehensiveness and that presented itself, quite compellingly, as based on, as growing out of, as being derived from nothing less than reason itself.

And what cause was there for worry? For does not the Qurʾān itself, in numerous passages, beseech its followers to reflect, to ponder, to exploit their God-given intellects, to employ their minds that perchance they might better fathom the purpose of their existence? "*A-fa-lā yaʿqilūn*" (Will they not then understand?);[1] "*A-fa-lā yatadabbarūn*" (Do they not consider [the Qurʾān] with care?);[2] "*Laʿallahum yatafakkarūn*" (Perchance they may reflect).[3]

Yet what to make of it were one to comply with God's behest to use one's intellect only to discover, unsettlingly, that what reason has delivered is somehow discordant with what God—Creator of all things, including man and his intellect—has Himself declared in revelation? For the Greeks spoke of man as well. They too spoke of the heavens and the earth, and of God. Reason, Aristotle tells us, perceives that God is a perfect being. Now, all may agree that God is perfect. But reason, Aristotle tells us further, judges that a perfect being must be, among other things, perfectly simple, indivisible, non-composite. So, while revelation may very well seem to predicate certain qualities or attributes of God—such that He is living (*ḥayy*), self-subsisting (*qayyūm*), mighty (*jabbār*), lovingly kind (*wadūd*), omniscient (*ʿalīm*), all-seeing (*baṣīr*), and all-hearing (*samīʿ*)—reason, for its part, avers that God cannot in reality possess any such attributes, for then He would no longer be perfectly simple, as reason requires

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[1] Q. *Yā Sīn* 36:68. All translations in this work, whether from Arabic or from European languages, including translations of the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, are mine except where otherwise indicated.

[2] Q. *al-Nisāʾ* 4:82 and *Muḥammad* 47:24. (Trans. ʿAbdullāh Yūsuf ʿAlī, *The Meaning of the Holy Qurʾān*. Hereafter Yusuf Ali.)

[3] Q. *al-Aʿrāf* 7:176, *al-Naḥl* 16:44, and *al-Ḥashr* 59:21.

Him to be, but composite; that is, He would be "composed" of His uniquely indivisible essence and His alleged attributes or qualities. Similarly, we are told, the dictates of sound reason affirm that God cannot be held to have knowledge of any particular, individual, instantiated thing in the world, as all such things are impermanent, springing into existence one day only to succumb to their demise the next. It follows by rational inference, therefore, that God cannot be held to know any such ephemera, for to know them would imply a relational change (and therefore an imperfection) in His knowledge. But, does not God Himself say in revelation, "*Wa-mā tasquṭu min waraqatin illā yaʿlamuhā*" (And not a leaf falls but that He knows it)?[4] Indeed, He does. And so the lines are drawn, and the battle is on.

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[4] Q. *al-Anʿām* 6:59.

Introduction

The present work, a revised version of my PhD dissertation, is the first book-length study of Ibn Taymiyya's ten-volume magnum opus, *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* (Refutation of the contradiction of reason and revelation).[1] This massive treatise, totaling over four thousand pages in the 1979 edition of Muḥammad Rashād Sālim,[2] represents the vigorous and sustained attempt of a major, late medieval Muslim theologian-jurist to settle a central debate that had raged among Muslim theologians and philosophers for more than six centuries: namely, the debate over the nature, role, and limits of human reason and its proper relationship to and interpretation of divine revelation. In the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, Ibn Taymiyya—who was, "by almost universal consensus, one of the most original and systematic thinkers in the history of Islam"[3]—attempts to transcend the dichotomy of "reason vs. revelation" altogether by breaking down and systematically reconstituting the very categories through which reason was conceived and debated in medieval Islam.

In the current study, based on a close, line-by-line reading of the full ten volumes of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, I provide a detailed and systematic account of the underlying, yet mostly implicit, philosophy and methodology on the basis of which Ibn Taymiyya addresses the question of the compatibility of reason and revelation. Discontent with previous attempts, Ibn Taymiyya not only critiques but also fundamentally reformulates the very epistemological, ontological, and linguistic assumptions that formed the sieve through which ideas on the relationship between reason and revelation had previously been filtered. Though Ibn Taymiyya does not lay out an underlying philosophy in systematic terms, I seek to demonstrate that a careful reading of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* reveals a broadly coherent system of thought that draws on diverse intellectual resources. Ibn Taymiyya synthesized these resources and, combining them with his own unique contributions, created an approach to the question of reason and revelation that stands in marked contrast to previously articulated approaches. Through this ambitious undertaking, Ibn Taymiyya develops views

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[1] Hereafter *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* or, more frequently, simply *Darʾ*.

[2] Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya, *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql, aw Muwāfaqat ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl li-ṣarīḥ al-maʿqūl*, ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, 11 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Kunūz al-Adabiyya, 1399/1979). The text itself is ten volumes, running a total of 4,046 pages, with an eleventh volume consisting of an index.

[3] Rapoport and Ahmed, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Times," 19.

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and arguments that have implications for fields ranging from the interpretation of scripture to ontology, epistemology, and the theory of language.

Earlier efforts to address the relationship between reason and revelation in Islam, such as the attempts of the theologians al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) and those of the philosophers Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) and Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198),[4] are well known and have received due scholarly attention; the current work aims to establish Ibn Taymiyya's contribution to the debate as a third pivotal chapter in classical Muslim attempts to articulate a response to the question of conflict between revelation and reason. Indeed, if Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd epitomize the Muslim philosophers' (or *falāsifa*'s) approach to the issue, with al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī representing that of mainstream Ashʿarī theology, then Ibn Taymiyya's *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* must be seen as the premier philosophical response to the question of reason and revelation from a Ḥanbalī perspective—a response that is equal to the works of his predecessors in terms of its comprehensiveness, cohesion, and sophistication. A study of this nature is particularly needed since, despite important recent corrective scholarship, lingering stereotypes of Ibn Taymiyya as little more than a simplistic and dogmatic literalist continue to result in an underappreciation of the true extent and philosophical interest of his creative engagement with the Islamic intellectual tradition as exemplified in a work like the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*.

The present book is addressed to several distinct audiences. First among these are students and scholars of, as well as those with a general interest in, Islamic theology and philosophy, medieval Islamic thought, Ibn Taymiyya studies, or post-classical Islamic intellectual history. Second, this study is relevant to those with an interest in Christian or Jewish rational theology of the High Middle Ages owing to the shared concerns taken up by medieval Muslim, Christian, and Jewish theologians and philosophers in both the European West and the Islamic East and in light of the common, Greek-inspired vocabulary and conceptual backdrop in terms of which all three communities conceived of and articulated theological and theo-philosophical issues. Finally, given that Ibn Taymiyya's *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* grapples with a philosophical and theological problem of universal import that transcends both centuries and religious communities, this book will be of interest to a broader, non-specialist Muslim readership, as well as to lay readers outside the Islamic tradition who are interested in questions concerning the relationship between reason and revelation more generally.

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[4] Known in the medieval and modern West by the Latinized form "Averroes."

1 Contours of a Conflict

The debate over reason and revelation among classical Muslim scholars centered primarily on the question of when and under what circumstances it was admissible to practice *taʾwīl*, or figurative interpretation, on the basis of a rational objection to the plain sense of a Qurʾānic verse or passage. Of particular concern in this respect were those passages containing descriptions of God, passages whose literal meaning seemed to entail *tashbīh*, an unacceptable assimilation of God to created beings. The Qurʾān affirms not merely that God exists but that He exists as a particular entity with certain intrinsic and irreducible qualities, or attributes. Some of these attributes that are (apparently) affirmed in revelation were held by various groups—particularly the philosophers, the Muʿtazila (sing. Muʿtazilī), and the later Ashʿarīs—to be rationally indefensible on the grounds that their straightforward affirmation would amount to *tashbīh*. In such cases, a conflict was thought to ensue between the clear dictates of reason and the equally clear statements of revelation, which resulted in the unsettling notion that a fundamental contradiction exists between reason and revelation, both of which have nevertheless been accepted as yielding true knowledge about ourselves, the world, and God.

The question of how to deal with such rational objections to the plain sense of revelation elicited various kinds of responses from philosophers and theologians, ultimately culminating in the "universal rule" (*al-qānūn al-kullī*), which Ibn Taymiyya paraphrases on the first page of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* as it had come to be formulated by the time of the famous Ashʿarī theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in the sixth/twelfth century. This rule, in brief, requires that in the event of a conflict between reason and revelation, the dictates of reason be given priority and revelation be reinterpreted accordingly via *taʾwīl*. This prescription is justified on the consideration that it is reason that grounds our assent to the truth of revelation, such that any gainsaying of reason in the face of a revealed text would undermine reason and revelation together.

Ibn Taymiyya makes the refutation of this universal rule his primary, explicit goal in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*. In doing so, he endeavors to prove that pure reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*, or *ṣarīḥ al-maʿqūl*) and a plain-sense reading of authentic revelation (*naql ṣaḥīḥ*, or *ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl*) can never stand in bona fide contradiction. Any perceived conflict between the two results from either a misinterpretation of the texts of revelation or, more pertinently for the current investigation, a misappropriation of reason. The more speculative (and hence dubious) one's rational premises and precommitments, the more extravagantly one must reinterpret—or twist, as Ibn Taymiyya would see it—revelation to bring it into line with the conclusions of such "reason."

We may illustrate this concept in the form of the following "Taymiyyan pyramid":

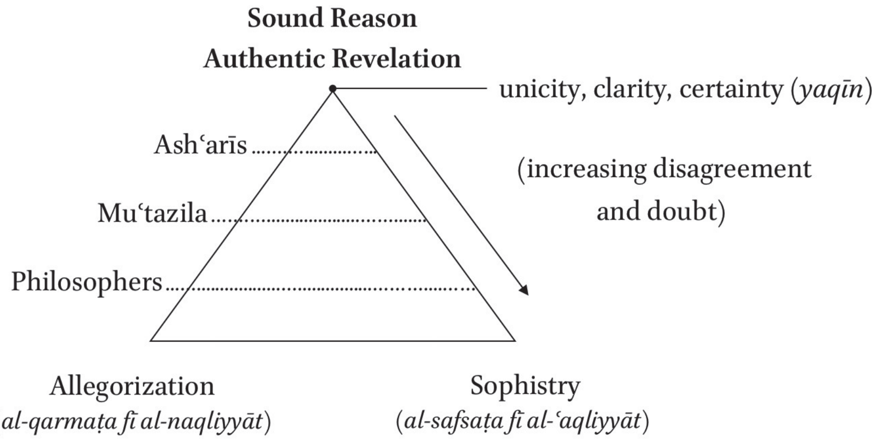
Sound Reason
Authentic Revelation
unicity, clarity, certainty (*yaqīn*)
Ashʿarīs
(increasing disagreement and doubt)
Muʿtazila
Philosophers
Allegorization (*al-qarmaṭa fī al-naqliyyāt*)
Sophistry (*al-safsaṭa fī al-ʿaqliyyāt*)

FIGURE 1 The Taymiyyan pyramid

Truth, for Ibn Taymiyya, is that point of unicity, clarity, and certainty (*yaqīn*) at which the testimony of sound reason and that of authentic revelation, understood correctly and without any attempt to interpret it away through allegory or metaphor, fully coincide. At the opposite end of this point lies pure sophistry (*safsaṭa*) in rational matters coupled with the unrestrained allegorization ("*qarmaṭa*")[5] of scripture. As individuals and groups move away from the point of truth where reason and revelation are fully concordant, the wide-reaching unity of their views on central points of both rational truth and religious doctrine gives way to ever increasing disagreement on even the most basic issues—such that the philosophers, in Ibn Taymiyya's words, "disagree (massively) even in astronomy (*ʿilm al-hayʾa*),[6] which is the most patent and least controversial of their sciences."[7]

In pursuit of his mission to resolve the conflict between reason and revelation, Ibn Taymiyya elaborates around thirty-eight arguments (*wujūh*, sing. *wajh*;

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5 Term derived from the Qarmatians (Ar. Qarāmiṭa), an Ismāʿīlī Shīʿī (pl. Shīʿa) group in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries known for adhering to a highly esoteric exegesis of the Qurʾān that often seemed to involve a complete disregard for the outward sense of the text. The Qarāmiṭa are perhaps most reputed for their infamous theft of the Black Stone and desecration of the well of Zamzam (into which they threw Muslim corpses) during the hajj season of 317/930. Esposito, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 253. For a more extensive treatment, see Madelung, "Ḳarmaṭī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. [hereafter *EI*^{2}], 4:660–665.

6 Short for *ʿilm hayʾat al-nujūm* (lit. "knowledge of the state of the stars").

7 *Darʾ*, 1:157, line 16 to 1:158, line 2. For passages where Ibn Taymiyya expresses the relationship between revelation, reason, concordance, and contradiction as illustrated by the Taymiyyan pyramid, see, e.g., *Darʾ*, 5:281, lines 11–12; 5:314, lines 13–15; 9:252, lines 12–14; 10:110, lines 6–9.

lit. "aspects" or "viewpoints") against the logical coherence of the theologians' universal rule and the integrity, in purely theoretical terms, of the premises and assumptions upon which it is based.[8] In the remainder of the *Darʾ*, he takes up what seem to be all the instances of alleged conflict between reason and revelation raised by various philosophical and theological schools over the seven centuries of the Islamic intellectual tradition that preceded him. It is here that Ibn Taymiyya both develops and applies a characteristic Taymiyyan philosophy and methodology through which he attempts to dissolve, once and for all, the ongoing conflict between reason and revelation. After doing away with the universal rule, Ibn Taymiyya elaborates an alternative theory of language that reframes the traditional distinction between literal (*ḥaqīqa*) and figurative (*majāz*) usage—upon which *taʾwīl* depends—in new ways meant to transcend the apparent opposition between the two. Finally, he reformulates key aspects of the philosophers' and theologians' ontological and epistemological assumptions that he holds responsible for producing the mere illusion of a conflict between reason and a plain-sense reading of revelation where, in his view, none truly exists.

Ultimately, Ibn Taymiyya seeks to resolve the conflict between reason and revelation by demonstrating that the very notion of reason employed by the philosophers and theologians is compromised, with the result that the arguments based on such "reason" are incoherent and invalid. His mission is to show that there is no *valid* rational argument that opposes or conflicts with the straightforward affirmations of revelation concerning any of the particular attributes or actions affirmed therein of God, the temporal origination of the universe, or any other topic. If Ibn Taymiyya, as he sees it, can do this convincingly, then the famous "rational objection" evaporates. Purified of its corrupted elements and specious presuppositions, the notion of reason can then be returned to what Ibn Taymiyya holds to be the inborn, unadulterated state of pure natural intelligence (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*). The final segment of Ibn Taymiyya's reconstructive project in the *Darʾ* is to establish precisely what this inborn, unadulterated state of pure natural intelligence is and the manner in which it interacts with revelation.

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[8] The table of contents of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* lists forty-four arguments (*wujūh*) in total. However, six of these "arguments" (nos. 17, 18, 19, 20, 43, and 44) consist of extended discussions of myriad philosophical topics and do not address the universal rule specifically (though Arguments 17 and 18 do contain important general principles regarding the relationship between reason and revelation). For this reason, I speak of Ibn Taymiyya's "thirty-eight arguments" (and not forty-four arguments) against the universal rule.

2 Why the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*?

Ibn Taymiyya's *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* is of particular scholarly interest on a number of levels. It is one of the central works—if not *the* central work—of a prolific, late medieval figure who, while relatively obscure for nearly half a millennium after his death,[9] has nevertheless come to wield considerable authority for many in the modern Muslim world.[10] Contemporary Muslim appropriations of Ibn Taymiyya's legacy, however, have often focused selectively on his political opposition to the Mongols[11] as justification for violent opposition to modern Muslim regimes, or they fixate on certain of his discrete creedal or juridical stances in a manner that is frequently devoid of historical context or conceptual nuance. This has tended to obscure the more intellectual side of Ibn Taymiyya's output and, as a consequence, has led to an underappreciation of the precise extent and nature of his thought. A careful and sustained engagement with a work such as the *Darʾ* promises to go a long way in calibrating this imbalance.

On an intellectual level, the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* is a highly compelling work on account of the astonishing richness and variety of the doctrines and trends with which its author deals. In an article that examines the overall contention of the *Darʾ* and includes a translation and detailed analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's ninth argument,[12] Yahya Michot marvels that "one can only be dumbfounded by the breadth of Ibn Taymiyyah's erudition,"[13] remarking that the quantity alone of his references in the *Darʾ* justifies our recognition of Ibn Taymiyya as "the most important reader of the *falāsifah* after Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in the Sunnī world."[14] Commenting on the quality of Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of the works he analyzes, Michot further remarks that "his virtuosity is often matched only by his relevance"[15] and suggests that the "spiritual father of contemporary Islamism" should, perhaps, henceforth be included in the "prestigious line of the commentators of [Aristotle]."[16] Dimitri Gutas likewise notes Ibn Taymiyya's enormous erudition and trenchant critical capacity, referring to him as "that highly percipient critic of intellectuals of all stripes."[17]

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[9] El-Rouayheb, "From Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī," 269–270 and overall.

[10] See Rapoport and Ahmed, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Times" for the remark that Ibn Taymiyya is "one of the most cited medieval authors" (p. 15) and that "today, few figures from the medieval Islamic period can claim such a hold on modern Islamic discourses" (p. 4).

[11] On which, see Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Mardin*, translated as *Muslims under Non-Muslim Rule*. Also on the selective misappropriation of Ibn Taymiyya for contemporary, violent political ends, see Mona Hassan, "Modern Interpretations and Misinterpretations of a Medieval Scholar." On Ibn Taymiyya's political thought more generally, see Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community*.

[12] Michot, "Vanités intellectuelles."

[13] "l'on ne peut que rester pantois devant l'ampleur de l'érudition d'Ibn Taymiyyah." Ibid., 599.

[14] Ibid.

[15] "sa virtuosité n'a souvent d'égale que sa pertinence." Ibid.

Finally, the subject matter of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*—namely, the often volatile relationship between human reason and divine revelation—lies deeply embedded in the substructure of all the Islamic religious disciplines. From law and legal theory to exegesis, theology, and beyond, the question concerning the implications of divine revelation and the proper use of the human intellect in approaching revelation is one that has surfaced over and over again, sometimes in different guises, over the course of centuries. For this reason, the central theme of the *Darʾ* is one that has implications, directly and indirectly, for Islamic thought as a whole, both past and present.

Given the fecundity and promise of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* as a text, it is all the more remarkable that four decades have passed since the first complete, ten-volume edition of the work was made available, yet no comprehensive study of it has been published to date by any scholar writing in a European language.[18] Several studies treat the *Darʾ* as a whole[19] or examine discrete portions of it in detail,[20] while other works touch directly on questions of reason—and especially of logic and metaphysics—that are also germane to the *Darʾ*[21] or elucidate the broader framework necessary for us to locate and interpret the *Darʾ* within Ibn Taymiyya's larger theological project.[22]

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[16] Ibid., 599–600.

[17] Gutas, "Heritage of Avicenna," 85.

[18] Nor, to my knowledge, has any scholar writing in Arabic addressed this text in full.

[19] Such as, e.g., the introductory section of Michot, "Vanités intellectuelles" (pp. 597–603). See also Heer, "Priority of Reason" and Abrahamov, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Agreement of Reason with Tradition," both of which provide a general overview of Ibn Taymiyya's arguments against the *mutakallimūn*. Ovamir Anjum synopsizes the *Darʾ* as a whole in *Politics, Law, and Community*, 196–215, while Tariq Jaffer offers an epitome of Ibn Taymiyya's response to al-Rāzī on the universal rule in *Rāzī*, 117–130. Two further investigations—el Omari, "Ibn Taymiyya's 'Theology of the Sunna'" and Griffel, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Ashʿarite Opponents"—examine Ibn Taymiyya's opposition to Ashʿarī theology, particularly its brand of *taʾwīl*, or figurative interpretation, as practiced most notably by figures such as al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī. See Vasalou, *Theological Ethics*, 229–241 for an examination of Ibn Taymiyya's approach to reason and revelation (based mostly on the *Darʾ*) in the context of his theory of ethics and Adem, "Intellectual Genealogy" (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2015) for an insightful account of Ibn Taymiyya's intellectual pedigree, including a substantial discussion of questions related to reason and revelation and to scriptural hermeneutics that feature prominently in the *Darʾ*. Finally, Yasir Kazi [also: Qadhi] examines a selection of Ibn Taymiyya's arguments against the universal rule and provides a detailed analysis of his notion of *fiṭra* in the *Darʾ* in "Reconciling Reason and Revelation" (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2013).

[20] For example, the main body of Michot, "Vanités intellectuelles," which translates and analyzes Argument 9 of Ibn Taymiyya's thirty-eight arguments against the universal rule, and

Yet despite the activity we have witnessed in the field of Taymiyyan studies, particularly over the past decade, the work that may justifiably be considered our author's magnum opus, the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*, has yet to receive the comprehensive attention it deserves. Several reasons may explain this. Perhaps the most obvious is the sheer size of the work, coupled with Ibn Taymiyya's well-known penchant for digression, repetitiveness, discussions embedded matryoshka-like within others, and a generally inconsistent structure and lack of linear progression.[23] Though Ibn Taymiyya's language itself is seldom difficult or cryptic, the foregoing inconveniences of style can make his works exasperating to read. When such features are multiplied tenfold in a work of as many volumes, the task becomes all the more daunting.

Michot, "Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary," which translates and analyzes part of Argument 20. Also relevant is the introduction to Jean R. Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Lettre à Abû l-Fidâʾ*. See, in a similar vein, Zouggar, "Interprétation autorisée et interprétation proscrite," which analyzes the introduction to the *Darʾ* as well as Argument 16, and Zouggar, "Aspects de l' argumentation," which analyzes arguments 1 through 5.

[21] Most importantly Wael Hallaq's magisterial *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians*, which consists of a heavily annotated translation of al-Suyūṭī's abridgement (entitled *Jahd al-qarīḥa fī tajrīd al-Naṣīḥa*) of Ibn Taymiyya's *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn* (alternatively known as *Naṣīḥat ahl al-īmān fī al-radd ʿalā manṭiq al-Yūnān*), preceded by an extensive analytical introduction. Also important are sections of Hallaq, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Existence of God" and two very substantial studies by Anke von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik" and "Poison of Philosophy" (this latter contains a discussion of the *Darʾ* specifically at pp. 265–267 and 276–284). See also Rayan, "Ibn Taymiyya's Criticism of the Syllogism" and Rayan, "Criticism of Ibn Taymiyyah on the Aristotelian Logical Proposition," as well as M. Sait Özervarli's analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's "Qurʾānic rationalism" in his "Qurʾānic Rational Theology." Earlier studies in a similar vein include al-Nashshār, *Manāhij al-baḥth*; Haque, "Ibn Taymīyyah"; Qadir, "Early Islamic Critique"; Brunschvig, "Pour ou contre la logique grecque"; and Madjid, "Ibn Taymiyya on Kalām and Falsafa" (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1984), which examines the problem of reason and revelation in Ibn Taymiyya's thought more generally. Finally, for a detailed study of Ibn Taymiyya's approach to the divine attributes—a question central to the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*—see Suleiman, *Ibn Taymiyya und die Attribute Gottes*.

[22] See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, particularly chap. 1. A summary of the main outlines of Ibn Taymiyya's theological vision and approach can also be found in Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," 633–641.

[23] Wael Hallaq observes that "Ibn Taymiyya's digressive mode of discourse," which "leaves the modern reader with a sense of frustration," entails that "the treatment of a particular issue may often not be found in any one chapter, or even in any one work. The search bearing on an issue takes one through the entire treatise, if not through several other tracts and tomes. Some two dozen treatises of his must be consulted in order to establish, for instance, his views on the problem of God's existence." Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, li.

A second reason for the relative neglect of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* may relate to Ibn Taymiyya's place in the sweep of Islamic history, coming as he does on the heels of what has traditionally been regarded as the great classical period of Muslim civilization (roughly the first five to six centuries of Islam),[24] a period that has so far attracted the bulk of Western scholarly interest in the pre-modern Islamic world. Twenty years ago, Gutas described Arabic philosophy in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries, for instance, as "almost wholly unresearched," then went on to suggest that this period "may yet one day be recognized as its golden age."[25] Fortunately, recent work—particularly by Khaled El-Rouayheb,[26] as well as Aaron Spevack,[27] Asad Q. Ahmed,[28] and others—has begun to fill this gap. In the current study, I seek to contribute to the growing field of post-classical Islamic scholarship—at the beginning of which Ibn Taymiyya stands—by laying a new brick in the edifice of our still nascent understanding of what is, in fact, turning out to be a rich and productive phase of Islamic thought.

Yet a third reason the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* remains relatively understudied may be related to the persisting notions of Ibn Taymiyya's identity as an intellectual figure. Frequently dismissed as a dogmatic literalist with little in evidence of genuine intellection, Ibn Taymiyya is often mentioned only briefly, if at all, in books concerned with Islamic thought, philosophy, or sometimes even theology.[29] Majid Fakhry, in his 1970 *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (2nd ed., 1983), classified Ibn Taymiyya, along with Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), as a "champion" of "slavish traditionalism,"[30] while Norman Calder, several decades later, opined that "a rigid dogmatic agenda is the major intellectual gift to Islam of Ibn Taymiyya."[31] By stark contrast, Shahab Ahmed spoke in 1998 of the "remarkable synthetic originality of Ibn Taymiyya's thought,"[32] while Richard Martin and Mark Woodward, in a 1997 study on reason in the Muʿtazila, concluded that "Ibn Taymiya was a more rational and independent-minded thinker than many of his later interpreters seem to have appreciated."[33] Sait Özervarli speaks of Ibn Taymiyya's "intellectual flexibility,"[34] while the prominent twentieth-century Azharī scholar Muḥammad Abū Zahra (d. 1394/1974) similarly credits Ibn Taymiyya with a "lack of rigidity" (*ʿadam jumūd*)[35]—accolades that contrast sharply with Georges Tamer's recent, roundly negative assessment of the philosophical interest of Ibn Taymiyya's thought.[36]

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[24] At least in the Arab-speaking lands, for the Persians, Turks, and Indians experienced their most splendorous days subsequent to this period.

[25] Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*.

[26] See El-Rouayheb, "Sunni Muslim Scholars on the Status of Logic"; El-Rouayheb, "Opening the Gate of Verification"; El-Rouayheb, *Relational Syllogisms*; and El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*.

[27] Spevack, *Archetypal Sunnī Scholar*.

[28] See, e.g., A. Ahmed, "Post-Classical Philosophical Commentaries/Glosses" and Ahmed and McGinnis, eds., "Rationalist Disciplines in Post-Classical (ca. 1200–1900 CE) Islam," Special thematic issue, *Oriens* 42, nos. 3–4 (2014).

[29] For a useful survey and discussion of the Western secondary literature on Ibn Taymiyya and his legacy (up until the early 2000s), see Krawietz, "Ibn Taymiyya," especially at p. 52 ff.

[30] Fakhry, *History*, 315.

[31] Calder, "*Tafsīr* from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr," 124–125.

[32] S. Ahmed, "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Satanic Verses," 122.

Birgit Krawietz remarked in 2003 that Western scholarship on Ibn Taymiyya has had a tendency to zero in on a narrow set of topics, often influenced by, among other things, political anxieties over his purported inspiration of contemporary radical movements in the Muslim world. Additionally, she remarks, "it seems that Western authors, by and large, still allow themselves to be led strongly by the pre-existing image of Ibn Taymiyya as a notorious troublemaker given [to him] by his opponents in debate."[37] The tide in Ibn Taymiyya studies has certainly shifted in the nearly two decades since these words were written, thanks to the numerous and variegated studies noted above. Today we have an appreciably sharper understanding of Ibn Taymiyya's thought than before, yet his oeuvre is vast and there remains much work to be done. It is my hope that the current volume will contribute meaningfully to this endeavor.

3 About This Work

3.1 *Aims, Method, and Scope*

The goal of the current work is to provide a detailed and systematic exposition of the philosophy of Ibn Taymiyya as it emerges from the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*. As we shall discover in chapter 2, Ibn Taymiyya led a turbulent life, and this turbulence is reflected in his writing. Not much given to systematic presentation, he is seldom explicit about his overall strategy or its underlying logic. To use a linguistic metaphor, Ibn Taymiyya simply speaks the language and leaves it to his reader to identify and describe the grammar. In the current study, I have attempted to produce a descriptive "grammar" of Ibn Taymiyya's worldview as it emerges in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*—a "codification," in a sense, of the implicit syntax responsible for the order and coherence of his thought. And, as we shall discover, his thought evidences both order and coherence in abundance, though they do not always emerge clearly amidst the din of clashing swords or the buoyant cadences of earnestly engaged polemic.

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[33] Martin and Woodward, *Defenders of Reason in Islam*, 126. Also cited by Krawietz ("Ibn Taymiyya," 54), who herself characterizes Ibn Taymiyya as "ein beträchtlich unabhängiger Kopf" (a considerably independent thinker [lit. "head"]). Krawietz, 61.

[34] Özervarli, "Qurʾānic Rational Theology," 80.

[35] Abū Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 218–219.

[36] Tamer, "Curse of Philosophy," 369–374.

[37] "Es scheint, als ob sich die westlichen Autoren insgesamt immer noch stark von dem von den Polemikgegnern Ibn Taymiyyas vorgegebenen Bild eines notorischen Störenfrieds leiten lassen." Krawietz, "Ibn Taymiyya," 57.

In mapping the contours of Ibn Taymiyya's thought, I have divided the *Darʾ*, for the purpose of analysis, into two main categories or types of text: (1) Ibn Taymiyya's thirty-eight discrete arguments against the universal rule of interpretation and (2) everything else. The manner in which the text opens gives the impression that the entirety of the *Darʾ* is to be dedicated to the elaboration of these arguments. In reality, Ibn Taymiyya presents thirty-eight well circumscribed arguments—some quite lengthy—that together take up most of the first and fifth volumes. These arguments are solely concerned with the validity of the universal rule and do not touch upon any substantive philosophical or theological debates per se. I account for these thirty-eight arguments comprehensively in chapter 3, where I draw out the epistemological renovations Ibn Taymiyya seeks to marshal against the universal rule. The remaining six arguments address substantive philosophical and theological questions, usually at such length that they trail off into extended disquisitions on one topic after another, eventually dissipating into the larger body of the text.[38] It is these substantive discussions—consisting mostly of lengthy citations from previous thinkers and Ibn Taymiyya's responses to them—that, in fact, occupy the vast majority of the *Darʾ*, and it is these discussions that form the surface from which we delve into the deeper structure of Ibn Taymiyya's methodology and thought (which we examine primarily in chapters 4 and 5).

To borrow from the language of the Islamic rational sciences, my goal has been to produce an exposition of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* that is "*jāmiʿ-māniʿ*," that is, inclusive of the whole of the *Darʾ* and exclusive of anything extraneous to it. By "inclusive of the whole of the *Darʾ*," I clearly do not mean that I have sought to capture and represent each and every argument or discussion in it.

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[38] Argument 19, for instance, begins on p. 320 of volume 1 and does not address the universal rule at all. Rather, it takes up the argument for the existence of God based on the temporal origination of movements and accidents, a discussion that then meanders from one topic to another over the course of the next *three volumes* of the text. It is not until one comes to the first page of volume 5 that one finally reads "al-Wajh al-ʿIshrūn" (Argument Twenty), which is itself an extended, substantive back and forth that spans two hundred pages, or half the volume.

Such an investigation would hardly be feasible nor, indeed, desirable. Rather, I have attempted to identify and extract, in as comprehensive a manner as possible, all the higher-order principles, presuppositions, and implicit assumptions that undergird and motivate Ibn Taymiyya's argumentation in the *Darʾ*—those elements that I collectively refer to as the underlying "philosophy of Ibn Taymiyya." These principles are often not stated explicitly but, rather, are embedded within discrete arguments. Therefore, it has been necessary to go beyond the specifics of the individual arguments in order to extract, and to abstract, the universal principles at play. Presenting Ibn Taymiyya's philosophy in the *Darʾ* has thus necessitated a substantially different approach than would be required for expositing in English a text whose principles have already been distilled by the author and presented systematically to the original reader. By saying that the distillation I attempt here is comprehensive (or "*jāmiʿ*"), I mean that it is based on a close reading of the entire text of the *Darʾ*, not merely selected portions. The elements of Ibn Taymiyya's worldview that I exposit in this study have emerged organically, over the course of literally thousands of pages of argumentation and discussion, as the dominant leitmotifs of the work. In most cases, I have cited several—and, where possible, all—instances throughout the *Darʾ* where a given concept is discussed or point substantiated.

By saying that the current study is "*māniʿ*," or exclusive of anything extraneous to the *Darʾ*, I mean that I have not cross-referenced discussions in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* with similar discussions found elsewhere in Ibn Taymiyya's writings, though I have endeavored to read and interpret the *Darʾ* in light of the rich secondary literature on Ibn Taymiyya mentioned above. Given the length of the *Darʾ* itself, the vastness of Ibn Taymiyya's larger oeuvre, and his well-known habit of addressing the same issue in many different places, a systematic cross-referencing of the primary sources would have hardly been feasible. For this reason, the current study should be seen primarily as an exposition and analysis of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* as a discrete work, not as a study of everything Ibn Taymiyya has written on the topic of reason and revelation. The *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* is a lengthy, cumbersome, and intellectually demanding text, one that I have worked to domesticate, to decipher, and to lay open for the reader such that its pith and purpose may be readily grasped. In any case, it is the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* that, by virtue of its title and opening salvo, appears to be the work Ibn Taymiyya himself meant to be taken as his definitive statement on the relationship between reason and revelation. Happily, the picture that emerges from our present study of the *Darʾ* harmonizes closely with the image currently crystallizing on the basis of other studies dedicated to Ibn Taymiyya's thought. This is yet another indication of the consistency and coherence of that thought, notwithstanding its sometimes erratic presentation.

3.2 *Structure and Major Themes*

This book is divided into two main parts, each consisting of three chapters. Part 1, "Reason vs. Revelation?," provides the historical and biographical background necessary to situate Ibn Taymiyya and the project to which he dedicates the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, then examines his contestation of the very dichotomy of reason versus revelation that he inherited.

Chapter 1 provides a broad overview of the historical development of the issue of reason and revelation in Islamic thought in the fields of theology, philosophy, and law from the first Islamic century to the time of Ibn Taymiyya in the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries. As a later, post-classical figure, Ibn Taymiyya makes numerous references and allusions to earlier Muslim thinkers, controversies, and schools of thought; we cannot understand his contributions to this vital debate, much less appreciate them, without sufficient knowledge of what came before him. Though chapter 1 is necessarily broad in scope, the discussion of each figure or school nevertheless focuses on those elements that touch directly upon our main topic—the question of reason and revelation—or that anticipate a distinct line of argumentation in the *Darʾ* that is taken up in later chapters. The background provided in chapter 1 is particularly relevant for non-specialists, as it allows them to familiarize themselves with the most relevant antecedent discussions on reason and revelation in Islam before embarking on their exploration of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* proper.

In chapter 2, sections 1–4 provide a survey of the life and times of Ibn Taymiyya, followed by an intellectual profile that situates him both ideologically and methodologically within the wider intellectual and religious context of late medieval Islam. Section 5 reconstructs Ibn Taymiyya's reception and interpretation of his own intellectual heritage by examining numerous remarks scattered throughout the *Darʾ*. It then presents *his* view of the nature and historical development of the conflict between reason and revelation in the centuries that preceded him. Understanding exactly how Ibn Taymiyya viewed and interpreted the issue is critical for comprehending not only his motivations but also, more importantly, the methodology and overall strategy he deploys in the *Darʾ* in his attempt to resolve the dilemma once and for all. Finally, section 6 considers how Ibn Taymiyya represents several earlier high-profile attempts to resolve the conflict between reason and revelation—those of Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Rushd—and how he situates his own project in the *Darʾ* vis-à-vis those of his three eminent predecessors. Thus, while the first four sections of chapter 2 complete the background provided in chapter 1, sections 5 and 6 mark the beginning of our full-fledged engagement with the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* itself.

Chapter 3 consists of an exhaustive analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's thirty-eight arguments against the philosophers' and theologians' universal rule. Through these arguments, he attacks not only the rule's logical coherence but also the main epistemic categories and assumptions upon which it is based. While Ibn Taymiyya himself presents these arguments in a disjointed and seemingly random fashion, I demonstrate in chapter 3 that by breaking down, regrouping, and reconstructing them, we can discern a coherent attempt on Ibn Taymiyya's part to reconfigure the very terms of the debate in several important ways. First, he redefines the opposition at stake not as one of reason versus revelation but as a purely epistemological question of certainty (*yaqīn*) versus probability (*ẓann*), with reason and revelation each serving as potential sources of both kinds of knowledge. He then builds on this to replace the dichotomy "*sharʿī–ʿaqlī*," in the sense of "scriptural versus rational," with the dichotomy "*sharʿī–bidʿī*," in the sense of "scripturally validated versus innovated," arguing that revelation itself both commends and exemplifies the valid use of reason and rational argumentation. With this altered dichotomy, Ibn Taymiyya attempts to undermine the inherited categorical differentiation between reason and revelation in favor of a new paradigm in which it is the epistemic quality of a piece of knowledge alone that counts rather than its provenance in either reason or revelation. In this manner, he subsumes reason itself into the larger category of "*sharʿī*," or scripturally validated, sources of knowledge.

In part 2, "Ibn Taymiyya's Reform of Language, Ontology, and Epistemology," chapters 4 and 5 explore the main elements of Ibn Taymiyya's underlying philosophy as gleaned from the *Darʾ al-taʿāruḍ*. In these chapters, I provide a systematic account of the positive, reconstructive project that I argue Ibn Taymiyya is carrying out in the *Darʾ*, a project in which he articulates an alternative theory of language as well as a reconstructed notion of reason in his bid to address the problem of the conflict between reason and revelation. In chapters 4 and 5, I present a formal, theoretical summary of all the major elements of Ibn Taymiyya's philosophy—his linguistic and hermeneutical principles, his ontology, and his epistemology—that are indispensable for understanding how his critique of reason and its alleged conflict with revelation is meant to work. In chapter 6, I then illustrate how Ibn Taymiyya applies the principles and methods of his philosophy to one of the most central substantive issues of concern to him (and to the Islamic theological tradition as a whole), namely, the question of the divine attributes, anthropomorphism, and the boundaries of figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*).

Chapter 4 explores how Ibn Taymiyya seeks to reformulate the theory of language by which revelation is understood. We first examine exactly what authentic revelation (*naql ṣaḥīḥ*) consists of for Ibn Taymiyya and the hermeneutical principles according to which it ought to be interpreted. Ibn Taymiyya proposes a textually self-sufficient hermeneutic, predicated on the

Qurʾān's own repeated characterization of itself as "clear" and "manifest" (*mubīn*), against what he deems to be the overly liberal use of *taʾwīl* based on the (in his view irremediably speculative) interpretations of his opponents among the rationalist theologians. We next explore Ibn Taymiyya's larger philosophy of language—resting on the twin pillars of context (*siyāq*, *qarāʾin*) and linguistic convention (*ʿurf*)—on the basis of which he attempts to discard the traditional distinction between literal (*ḥaqīqa*) and figurative (*majāz*) usage while yet avoiding the simplistic literalism of which his critics have often accused him. Chapter 4 also examines Ibn Taymiyya's account of semantic shifts that took place in certain *termini technici* prior to his day. These shifts in the meaning of key technical terms, he argues, resulted in interpretive distortions that saw later meanings unwittingly projected anachronistically onto earlier texts. The chapter closes with an illustration of Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of this phenomenon via an extended case study of the terms *wāḥid* (one), *tawḥīd* (oneness of God), and *tarkīb* (composition).

Chapter 5 examines Ibn Taymiyya's critique of what the philosophers and later theologians construe as reason, then explores his elaboration of what he deems to be authentic sound reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*). Ibn Taymiyya's critique targets both the ontology and the epistemology of the philosophers by challenging what he sees as their chronic confusion between the realm of externally existent entities (*mā fī al-aʿyān*) and the realm of that which exists only in the mind (*mā fī al-adhhān*). While all knowledge of external reality must ultimately have its basis either in immediate sensation (*ḥiss*) or in reliable transmitted reports (*khabar*), Ibn Taymiyya nevertheless assigns theoretical reason several important functions, namely, (1) to abstract similarities shared by existent particulars into universal concepts (*kulliyyāt*), (2) to issue judgements in the form of predicative statements relative to existing particulars, and (3) to draw inferences of various kinds on the basis of the innate (*fiṭrī*) and necessary (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge of fundamental axioms embedded in reason and known, therefore, in an a priori (*awwalī*) or self-evident (*badīhī*) manner. Ibn Taymiyya's reformed epistemology—based on experience, reason, and transmitted reports—is undergirded by an expanded notion of the moral-cum-cognitive faculty of the *fiṭra*, or "original normative disposition." Ultimately, this epistemology is guaranteed by a universalized notion of *tawātur* (recurrent mass transmission), a concept that Ibn Taymiyya borrows from the Muslim textual and legal traditions and applies expansively as the final guarantor of all human cognition.

Chapter 6 brings together the sundry elements of Ibn Taymiyya's attempted hermeneutic, ontological, and epistemological renovations and demonstrates how he rallies them to resolve, once and for all, the contradiction between reason and revelation in medieval Islam, particularly with regard to the question of the divine attributes. Since God, in Islamic ontology, exists in the unseen realm (*ghayb*), Ibn Taymiyya takes up the centuries-old theological debate over the legitimacy of drawing an analogy (*qiyās*) between the empirical (or "seen") and the metaphysical (or "unseen") realms of existence. While he argues that such an inference is not valid for establishing the factual existence (*thubūt*) or the specific ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of would-be entities in the unseen realm, he insists that it is not merely legitimate but, indeed, mandatory for us to draw such an analogy on the level of universal meanings (*maʿānī*) and notions (also *maʿānī*) abstracted from our everyday empirical experience. It is only by drawing this latter sort of analogy that we can, in fact, understand *something* meaningful about entities existing in the unseen realm that are denoted by names (*asmāʾ*) that they share with the familiar entities of our contingent empirical experience.

As I demonstrate in chapter 6, Ibn Taymiyya seeks to preserve God's comprehensibility (and hence His conceivability and, in a sense, knowability to us) by virtue of the names and descriptions that are applied both to Him and to created entities without, however, God resembling His creation in any ontologically relevant way—the only way that, for Ibn Taymiyya, would entail the kind of theologically objectionable *tashbīh*, or "assimilationism," that the philosophical and theological recourse to *taʾwīl* was originally meant to remediate. In this manner, the disparate elements of Ibn Taymiyya's theory of language, his ontology, and his epistemology eventually converge in a synthesis that is meant to accommodate a robust and rationally defensible affirmationism vis-à-vis the divine attributes while yet avoiding the *tashbīh* that the Islamic philosophical and later theological traditions so often presumed such affirmationism to entail.

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Concerning the larger implications of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, perhaps the most compelling part of Ibn Taymiyya's project goes beyond the man himself to the problematic with which he wrestled. In a sense, the whole question of the tension between revelation and reason, which Ibn Taymiyya internalized so poignantly, can in many ways be considered a key problem of Islamic modernity. Though the specific issues have changed—few today, for example, from the most textually-based conservative to the most liberal-minded reformer, are much concerned by the question of the divine attributes—the underlying problematic remains, in significant ways, very much the same. Whether it is the issue not precisely of reason and revelation but, say, of science and revelation or, for instance, the tension between sacralized and secularized visions of law and government, which has been a particularly troubling issue for Muslims in the modern period, the root of all these issues can be traced to the deeper-lying tensions with which Ibn Taymiyya grappled when confronting the delicate question of the relationship between reason and revelation in his own day.

And, in an almost uncanny way, the crisis that many Muslims have faced since the nineteenth century, both in and with modernity, is strikingly similar to the intellectual crisis (and later also the political crisis) of early and medieval Islam, crises that had come to a head at the time of Ibn Taymiyya and that swept him up, heart and soul, into the great existential drama that played out seven centuries ago. The challenge this time around has come from strikingly similar quarters: then from Greece in the form of an intellectual challenge, today from a modern civilization also descended, intellectually, from Greece. And while in Ibn Taymiyya's day the intellectual and the political challengers were differentiated, the modern period has witnessed something like the intellectual power of Greece and the military might of the Mongols combined—Aristotle and Genghis Khan, if we may, wrapped into one. Now as then, the question remains: How might the tension once more be resolved between the relentless vicissitudes of the times and a Book whose adherents believe was sent down by an eternal God into our world of time and space on the tongue of a prophet some fourteen hundred years ago?

But before we join Ibn Taymiyya on his quest to resolve the discord between reason and revelation, we must first understand the context and the overall intellectual situation that presented itself to him with such existential urgency so many centuries ago.

PART 1

Reason vs. Revelation?

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CHAPTER 1

Reason and Revelation in Islam before Ibn Taymiyya

Ibn Taymiyya's massive effort to refute the universal rule and his exhaustive deconstruction and reconstruction of reason in his colossal work, *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*, were not just a spur-of-the-moment intellectual exercise. Rather, his efforts were occasioned by centuries of intense theological and intellectual debate that involved scholars of law, theology, and philosophy, as well as Sufis, and expressed a fundamental clash between distinct epistemological approaches. This debate did not simply result from the absorption of Greek philosophy into Muslim thought, as has often been assumed, but manifested itself in nascent form from the earliest days of the Islamic community. The following sections provide an overview of the multi-layered development and interaction between reason and revelation in the Qurʾān and the major Islamic disciplines—with a particular emphasis on theology—up to the time of Ibn Taymiyya in the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries.

1 Reason *and* Revelation, Reason *in* Revelation

The Qurʾān is a book intensely concerned with knowledge.[1] In addition to making various declarative and imperative statements, it repeatedly invites those it addresses to reflect—especially to reflect upon the created order, including man, as a sign of God. In addition, it makes abundant use of arguments to persuade its audience of the truth of its teachings, thus inviting believers, from the very inception of revelation, to an integrated paradigm of reason and revelation. The Qurʾān, moreover, does not present itself as the least bit self-conscious or defensive in the face of a questioning human reason; indeed, it boldly challenges its readers to find within it any fundamental contradiction[2] and to inspect the created order with careful scrutiny for any gaps or incongruences.[3]

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[1] The word *ʿilm* (knowledge) and other verbal and nominal derivatives of the root *ʿ-l-m* (to know) appear in the Qurʾān in a staggering 811 verses, or roughly thirteen percent of all verses of the Qurʾān.

[2] "Do they not consider the Qurʾān (with care)? Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy." (Q. *al-Nisāʾ* 4:82); trans. Yusuf Ali.

[3] "(3) … No want of proportion will you see in the creation of the Most Merciful. So turn your

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The Qurʾān identifies the locus of rational reflection variously as the "*ʿaql*," "*qalb*," "*lubb*," and "*fuʾād*," among other, related terms.[4] It also makes frequent use of terms connoting mental cognition and reflection, describes itself as bringing knowledge to a humanity that has "been given of knowledge but little,"[5] draws stark distinctions between "those who know and those who know not,"[6] repeatedly exhorts mankind to ponder and to reflect,[7] and, significantly, insists that belief in God and the acceptance of the truth of revelation arise as the natural result of a healthy, properly functioning intellect. It is a remarkable fact that nowhere in the Qurʾān is knowledge (*ʿilm*) contrasted with faith (*īmān*), as is typical in modern parlance, but only with lack of knowledge, or ignorance (*jahl, jahāla*).[8] Knowledge and faith, rather, are presented as being fully concomitant and mutually entailing. The distinctly Enlightenment notion that one has "faith" in something of which one does not have, and in principle cannot have, bona fide knowledge, or the related notion that knowing something precludes having "faith" in it, is entirely alien to the Qurʾānic worldview and epistemology.[9] At the same time, the Qurʾān squarely admits that human reason, being a faculty of a limited and finite being, is of necessity not boundless—for "of knowledge you have been given but little,"[10] and

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sight again: do you see any flaw? (4) Then turn your sight twice more; (your) sight will come back to you feeble and weary." (Q. *al-Mulk* 67:3–4).

[4] For a discussion, with Qurʾānic references, of various terms used in the Qurʾān to signify reason, reflection, and related meanings—particularly the words *yaʿqilūn/taʿqilūn*, *ulū al-albāb*, *yatafakkarūn*, *yubṣirūn*, *yafqahūn*, *ulū al-abṣār*, and *yaʿlamūn*—see al-Kattānī, *Jadal*, 1:281–285. See also Kalin, *Reason and Rationality in the Qurʾan*.

[5] See, for example, Q. *al-Isrāʾ* 17:85.

[6] As in the verse "Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who know not?'" (Q. *al-Zumar* 39:9).

[7] For example, "Thus do We explain the signs in detail for a people who reflect (*yatafakkarūn*)" (Q. *Yūnus* 10:24) and similar at Q. *al-Raʿd* 13:3; *al-Naḥl* 16:11, 16:69; *al-Rūm* 30:21; *al-Zumar* 39:42; and *al-Jāthiya* 45:13. Also, "perchance they may reflect" (*laʿallahum yatafakkarūn*) at Q. *al-Aʿrāf* 7:176 and similar at Q. *al-Naḥl* 16:44 and *al-Ḥashr* 59:21.

[8] See, e.g., Q. *al-Baqara* 2:30, 2:216, 2:232; *Āl ʿImrān* 3:66; *al-Naḥl* 16:74, 16:78; and *al-Nūr* 24:19 for lack of knowledge (especially in comparison to God's omniscience) and, e.g., Q. *al-Nisāʾ* 4:17; *al-Māʾida* 5:50; *Hūd* 11:29; *al-Furqān* 25:63; *al-Naml* 27:55; *al-Zumar* 39:64; and *al-Ḥujurāt* 49:6 for references to ignorance.

[9] Josef van Ess has observed that "Christianity speaks of 'mysteries' of faith; Islam has nothing like that. For Saint Paul, reason belongs to the realm of the 'flesh'; for Muslims, reason, *ʿaql*, has always been the chief faculty granted human beings by God." Van Ess, *Flowering*, 153–154. Similarly, Eric Ormsby begins a chapter on Arabic philosophy with the statement, "Reason is central to Islam," then goes on to elaborate that "an intense preoccupation with reason is one of the most enduring and characteristic aspects of Islam and of Islamic culture." Ormsby, "Arabic Philosophy," 125.

[10] "*wa-mā ūtītum min al-ʿilmi illā qalīlan*" (Q. *al-Isrāʾ* 17:85).

indeed, more soberingly, "God knows and you know not."[11] The Qurʾānic revelation, therefore, actively directs human beings to think and to reflect with their minds, the full and earnest use of which will inexorably bring them not only to God and the truth of religion but also, simultaneously, to the understanding that ultimately God alone is absolute and that all else, including man and his formidable powers of intellect, is relative and limited.

Complementing its insistence on the centrality of knowledge and its persistent encouragement to reflect, the Qurʾān also describes itself variously as an "evincive proof" (*burhān*),[12] a "criterion of judgement" (*furqān*),[13] an "elucidation" (*bayān*),[14] a "clarification of all things" (*tibyān^{an} li-kulli shayʾ*),[15] and as "consummate wisdom" (*ḥikma bāligha*).[16] Indeed, it frequently challenges its readers with a variety of arguments, inferences that are to be drawn, step by step, by the person who reflects with consideration.[17] The notable fact that the Qurʾān grounds its teachings not only in raw assertion but also through argumentation and persuasion is often overlooked. Yet this fact is of key importance because it establishes, or at least opens the door to, a complementary and harmonious paradigm of the relationship between reason and revelation in and through the text of revelation itself.[18]

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[11] Q. *al-Baqara* 2:216. Also Q. *al-Baqara* 2:232, *Āl ʿImrān* 3:66, *al-Naḥl* 16:74, and *al-Nūr* 24:19.

[12] Q. *al-Nisāʾ* 4:174.

[13] Q. *al-Baqara* 2:185. See also Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:4 and *al-Furqān* 25:1.

[14] Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:138.

[15] Q. *al-Naḥl* 16:89.

[16] Q. *al-Qamar* 54:5.

[17] See Blankinship, "Early Creed," 34, where the author remarks that the Qurʾān "develops its own themes argumentatively, sometimes at considerable length, to explain its teachings, and to rebut the established anti-monotheistic arguments of its initial target audience." Rosalind Ward Gwynne has dedicated an entire monograph, based on al-Ghazālī's treatise *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*, to identifying and categorizing all instances of rational argumentation used in the Qurʾān. She remarks in the introduction to this study that "I believe that the reader will be surprised at how thick with argument the Qurʾān actually is." Gwynne, *Logic, Rhetoric, and Legal Reasoning*, xiii. See also van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 1:48, where he likewise makes note of the Qurʾān's frequent use of dialectical argumentation as it engages with the Prophet's opponents directly in an argumentative and reasoned manner.

[18] The view that the Qurʾān makes abundant use of various kinds of argumentation is echoed by the famous ninth-/fifteenth-century polymath Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) in his *al-Itqān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, where he states: "Scholars have held that the Qurʾān contains all kinds of [rational] proofs (*barāhīn*, *adilla*) and that there exists no [type of] indication (*dalāla*), disjunction (*taqsīm*), or admonition (*taḥdhīr*) built upon the general categories of knowledge afforded by reason and revelation (*tubnā min kulliyyāt al-maʿlūmāt al-ʿaqliyya wa-l-samʿiyya*) that the Book of God has failed to mention, except that it has mentioned them according to the customary [speech] habits of the Arabs and not

Further evidence of the argumentative nature of the initial revelatory moment can be found in classical sources of *ḥadīth*[19] and *sīra*.[20] These sources record echoes of discussions during the lifetime of the Prophet, discussions that can comfortably be termed proto-theological by virtue of their subject matter rather than because of any conscious effort to engage in the deliberate, methodical speculation implied in the common use of the term "theological." The Prophet was naturally questioned by his Companions on numerous occasions regarding matters of the hereafter, God, angels, and a host of other topics directly connected to the creedal content of the new faith. Some *ḥadīth* reports portray the Prophet as instructing his followers—in a manner similar to that of the Qurʾān—by inviting them to reflect and to draw certain conclusions on their own.[21] Other narrations show the Prophet warning his community against the inherent futility of pursuing certain lines of rational inquiry that are necessarily without issue, such as the *ḥadīth* that states: "Satan shall come to you and say, 'Who created this?' and 'Who created that?' until he says, 'Who created your Lord?' So if anyone of you should reach this point, let him seek refuge in God and desist"[22]—as if to alert his Companions that the argument of an infinite causal regress cannot, with proper rational justification, be extended to

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in accordance with the detailed [discursive] methods of the theologians." See al-Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, 4:60. Earlier protagonists in the debate on reason and revelation in Islam also based their claims for the legitimacy of certain forms of ratiocination on particular verses of the Qurʾān. Al-Ghazālī, for example, believed he had located the five classical figures of the Aristotelian syllogism in the Qurʾān in implicit form, while Ibn Rushd identified the three levels of argumentation as defined by Aristotle, namely, rhetorical, dialectical, and demonstrative. On al-Ghazālī, see Chelhot, "«al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm»," esp. 6–8 and Marmura, "Ghazali's Attitude to the Secular Sciences and Logic," esp. 102–103. On Ibn Rushd, see Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, esp. 32–37.

[19] For a précis on the Western scholarly debate concerning the authenticity of *ḥadīth* material, see Harald Motzki's introduction in Motzki, ed., *Hadith: Origins and Developments* and Brown, *Hadith*, 226–276, both of whom discuss the recent scholarship that casts doubt on the radical skepticism of earlier generations of Islamicists (such as, most famously, Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht). Furthermore, the types of questions raised in the *ḥadīth* cited here are not so formally developed or theoretical as to appear anachronistic for this early period. In fact, it would be extraordinary if the Companions had never asked the Prophet any questions related to theological issues.

[20] See van Ess, *Flowering*, 45ff. for a discussion of the *sīra* literature as containing formal argumentation.

[21] See al-Kattānī's discussion of the use of rational methods of inference by the Prophet and his Companions. Al-Kattānī, *Jadal*, 1:614–627, 642–643.

[22] See, e.g., al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 807; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 69–70. An alternative version of the *ḥadīth* says, "… let him say, 'I have believed in God and His messengers'" (Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 69), and a third version contains the wording "People will continue to pose questions until they ask, 'Who created God?'" (Muslim, 69).

God, the Necessarily and Beginninglessly Existent. Finally, a few *ḥadīth* reports depict the Companions as occasionally becoming embroiled in controversy over theological topics. In one instance, a group of them were arguing over the divine decree (*qadar*), whereupon the Prophet, overhearing their altercation, became vexed and obliged them to remain silent concerning such matters that are "but known unto God."[23] The main theme of these instances appears to be that the use of reason is reliable and legitimate in some domains, that it is invalid if based on false or absurd premises, and, finally, that certain matters lie inherently beyond the ken of rational apprehension altogether. The implication would therefore seem to be that we should (1) employ reason to its full extent in areas that are amenable to rational scrutiny, (2) use reason for such matters in a correct and valid manner, and (3) accept that some matters, by their very nature and that of reason itself, are simply not subject to rational apprehension such that trying to "rationalize" them can lead, of necessity, only to their distortion. The Qurʾān and the prophetic Sunna, therefore, appear to urge man to deploy his rational faculties within their proper scope and domain, yet we are ever reminded that, as great as these powers may be, in the larger scheme of reality and from the perspective of divine omniscience, we have indeed "been given of knowledge but little."[24]

2 The Early Emergence of Rationalist and Textualist Tendencies: The Case of the Law

In addition to its numerous exhortations to think, reflect, and ponder and its own frequent deployment of rational argumentation in support of its fundamental doctrines, the Qurʾān also contains the germ of theological speculation by virtue of its engagement with questions of ultimate truth and the interpretation of reality. Though the utterances of the Qurʾān were accepted by all Muslims as the authentically preserved and transmitted articulations of divine revelation, such utterances could nevertheless lend themselves to more than one understanding—a fact that was bound to create rifts not only in questions of theology but also in the daily tumble of social and political affairs. Indeed, the first schisms that arose in the early community were expressed, to some degree, in theological terms, though they were unmistakably political in origin.[25] This is hardly surprising given that the Qurʾān both specifically addressed and intimately interacted with the socio-political milieu of its original recipients, even as it presented its message in universal ethical and spiritual terms. Concurrent with early political developments and the inchoate proto-theological discussions they engendered, other disciplines were starting to be developed more systematically and deliberately; these were, primarily, Qurʾānic exegesis (*tafsīr*),[26] grammar,[27] *ḥadīth*,[28] and law (*fiqh*). These disciplines represent fully indigenous Islamic sciences pursued (originally) with the tools and methods of reasoning and analysis that came intuitively to the earliest generations of Muslims. These tools and methods, in turn, directly influenced the earliest systematic theological reflections that arose in the first Islamic century. We focus here on the domain of law.

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[23] A more extensive discussion of such instances can be found in Abdel Haleem, "Early *Kalām*," 71–88.

[24] It is significant that the Qurʾān's emphasis on the validity of reason, on what reasoned reflection ultimately leads to (namely, knowledge of and faith in God), and on the inherent limits of reason (namely, the fact that certain existent realities escape the grasp of reason altogether) parallels the Qurʾānic depiction of the empirical realm that it so urgently encourages us to ponder. Our senses mediate to us a picture of reality that reveals an underlying unity and perfection of structure that rational reflection (*ʿaql*) finds can only be the result of an intelligent, omniscient will backed by boundless powers of instantiation; yet reason also discerns that not all that exists necessarily lies within the realm of our empirical perception. In this vein, the very beginning of the second chapter of the Qurʾān makes mention of "those who believe in the unseen" (Q. *al-Baqara* 2:3), enunciating thereby the existence of two fundamental orders of reality: the visible, or seen (*shahāda*), and the invisible, or unseen (*ghāʾib*). In the Qurʾānic worldview, a thing is no less real for its being imperceptible to our senses.

Whereas the enterprise of speculative theology, as we shall see, lays claim by its very nature to being a rational (*ʿaqlī*) science, the subject matter of the legal sciences was seen to be squarely revelational/transmitted (*naqlī*). Be that as it may, revealed texts must be understood and interpreted in order to determine their relevance and applicability to a given situation. It is significant that the very term usually translated as "law" is *fiqh*, the primary meaning of which is simply "to understand."[29] The methodological and hermeneutical principles involved in deriving the law are, therefore, without question based on disciplined and methodical reasoning—reasoning that began as informal *raʾy*, or reasoned opinion, and became ever more sophisticated and refined as the science of jurisprudence developed. The use of reasoning in legal matters was, however, regarded with suspicion by some, who preferred to resolve legal questions, to the extent possible, solely on the basis of the revealed texts.[30] Similar to trends taking place in the emerging sciences of Qurʾānic exegesis and grammar, this methodological bifurcation resulted in two distinct approaches to questions of law. One trend was self-consciously based on a strict adherence to *ḥadīth* (with as little interpretation of them as possible), while the second accorded freer rein to reasoned opinion (*raʾy*) when applying revelation to the social and legal realities at hand.[31] The opposing methodological tendencies of *ahl al-raʾy* (the people of reasoned opinion) and *ahl al-ḥadīth* (the people of *ḥadīth*) resulted in a tension that was not resolved until the third/ninth century.

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[25] In their careful, historically and theologically informed study of Islamic theology, Louis Gardet and M.-M. Anawati speak of the "«ferment» déposé par les dissensions politiques au sein de la pensée religieuse." See Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 35.

[26] On the earliest attitudes towards *tafsīr*, see ibid., 26–31, as well as Gilliot, "Kontinuität und Wandel," 5–17 and Gilliot, "Exegesis of the Qurʾān." For a general overview of *tafsīr* as a genre, see Saleh, "Quranic Commentaries." On the nascent "rationalist" versus more "textualist" trends in early *tafsīr*, see al-Kattānī, *Jadal*, 1:504–529ff.

[27] On the rise and significance of the science of Arabic grammar, see Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, 60–84. On the introduction of grammar and the nascent linguistic sciences into early *tafsīr*, see Gilliot, "Kontinuität und Wandel," 18–25. For a detailed study of the relationship between grammar and the development of *tafsīr*, see Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar*. For a discussion of the contrasting methodologies, and particularly the variant terminology, of the Kufan and the (more rationalistically inclined) Basran schools of grammar, see Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar*, 9–16.

[28] On the vitally important notion of "*sunna*" for traditional Arab society and, hence, for the Prophet Muḥammad's contemporaries, who received him as no less than the Messenger of God, see Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 123–198 (esp. 123–177). See also Ansari, "Islamic Juristic Terminology," 259–282.

It fell to Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) to sketch what eventually became the outlines of a reconciliation between these opposing tendencies. In his famous treatise *al-Risāla*, al-Shāfiʿī argued for restricting the notion of *sunna* exclusively to the Sunna of the Prophet and further mandated that this prophetic Sunna be supported by properly attested *ḥadīth* reports.[32] At the same time, he articulated a theory of legal methodology that reduced the kinds of rational arguments that could be used, but simultaneously confirmed and consecrated those kinds of rational arguments accepted in the theory (primarily analogical reasoning, known as *qiyās*). The result of al-Shāfiʿī's effort was thus to defend and normalize the use of *qiyās* against those who were opposed to it—making it a permanent part of Islamic juristic thought—and to reduce other, less controlled methods of legal reasoning.

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[29] Derivatives of the root *f-q-h* occur twenty times in the Qurʾān, invariably with the meaning of "to understand," "fathom," "comprehend." In a well-known *ḥadīth*, the causative form "*faqqaha*" (to cause to understand or comprehend) is used in an analogous sense: "*man yurid Allāh bihi khayran yufaqqihhu fī al-dīn*" (For whomever God desires good, He grants him understanding in religion). See, e.g., al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 30 (and elsewhere); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 417 (and elsewhere); al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, 4:385; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 80.

[30] Watt, *Formative Period*, 181.

[31] Concerning the relationship between the availability of *ḥadīth* and the use of reason in legal matters, some have speculated that early Iraqi jurists relied more heavily on *raʾy* because they had access to fewer *ḥadīth* reports—and, by consequence, less knowledge regarding the details of the prophetic Sunna—than their counterparts in the Hijaz. This point is made, for example, by al-Kattānī (*Jadal*, 1:307–309, 631), but also by no less authoritative an interpreter of early Muslim history than Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), who, in his discussion of the rise of a *ḥadīth*- versus a *raʾy*-based jurisprudence in the early period, identifies the latter with the jurists of Iraq, explaining that "the people of Iraq had little in the way of *ḥadīth* (*kāna al-ḥadīth qalīlan fī ahl al-ʿIrāq*) for the reasons we have previously stated; thus, they made much use of *qiyās* (*fa-istaktharū min al-qiyās*) and became skilled in it (*wa-maharū fīhi*)." Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 446, lines 9–12.

Al-Shāfiʿī's thesis should not be seen as a one-sided triumph of "textualists"[33] over "rationalists." While much of the *Risāla* is squarely aimed at justifying the preeminence of scriptural sources of the law—especially the prophetic Sunna as expressed in *ḥadīth*—over "free" rational methods, al-Shāfiʿī's incorporation of the rational processes of analogical reasoning into legal theory was apparently enough for hard-core textualists to associate him with the (legal) rationalists, and even with the Muʿtazila.[34] In tracing a middle path between textualism and rationalism, however, the *Risāla* aptly represents "the first attempt at synthesizing the disciplined exercise of human reasoning and the complete assimilation of revelation as the basis of the law"[35]—a synthesis that came to form the foundation of Islamic legal theory as a whole after the late third/ninth century. The tension that al-Shāfiʿī sought to alleviate between rational modes of reasoning and the revealed texts—that is, between reason and revelation—constitutes a reflection on the legal plane of a much broader tension that was occurring in Islamic thought as a whole, including theology, and that would eventually require a synthesis analogous to that of al-Shāfiʿī in law.

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[32] For a concise presentation and discussion of the contents of al-Shāfiʿī's *Risāla*, see Hallaq, *History*, 21–29. For an extended study and reinterpretation of this foundational text, see Lowry, *Early Islamic Legal Theory*. For a complete English translation of the *Risāla* with parallel Arabic text, see Lowry, *Epistle on Legal Theory*.

[33] Most contemporary scholars speak reflexively of a "rationalist" versus a "literalist" tendency. I consider the term "literalist" to be problematic, as it carries with it implicit assumptions regarding reason, the use of language, and the relationship of language to rationality that prejudge a number of issues central to Ibn Taymiyya's critique. I have therefore opted for "textualist" as a more neutral, descriptive term. My usage follows that of Bernard Weiss in *The Spirit of Islamic Law*, particularly chap. 3, where he defines and uses the term "textualist" in the same manner as described here, and primarily for the same reasons.

[34] Hallaq, *History*, 31.

[35] Ibid., 34. As we see below, the Ashʿarī theological school attempted, one century later, to effect a similar reconciliation between reason and revelation by synthesizing the disciplined exercise of human reason and the complete assimilation of revelation as the basis of theology. And this is precisely Ibn Taymiyya's project as well, as we shall discover in the course of this study, albeit on the basis of a radically different notion of reason—reason returned, as Ibn Taymiyya contends, to its original, intuitive (*fiṭrī*), pre-*kalām*/pre-*falsafa* synthetic state. For a discussion of the synthesis of reason and revelation and the lack of dichotomy between the two in the early Muslim community, see Winter, "Reason as Balance."

3 Early Theological Reflection and Contention

The methodology of early theological reflection initially reflected patterns of thought and methods of reasoning worked out in the indigenous disciplines of Qurʾān exegesis, grammar, *ḥadīth*, and law. This was because the men engaged in these early theological ruminations were, first and foremost, jurists who were required to know grammar and *tafsīr* in order to engage in *fiqh*.[36] But the early Muslims who first developed the new Islamic sciences were by no means living in comfortable isolation in the Arabian Peninsula. Just thirty years after the Prophet's death, the Muslims found themselves at the helm of a vast cosmopolitan empire that stretched from western Libya to the eastern borders of Persia and, less than one hundred years later, from northern Spain in the west to the Indus River in the east. In the year 40/661, following the assassination of the fourth caliph, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the capital of the new empire was relocated from Medina (and briefly Kufa) to Damascus, an ancient seat of culture most recently heir to a fecund overlay of Hellenistic high culture deposited onto the Syro-Aramaic backdrop of an age-old Near Eastern civilization. The earliest influences of Greek thought came about through contact with the Hellenistic tradition that was still being cultivated in the Christian schools established by the Sassanians in Iraq and Persia and continued by the Muslims who took possession of these territories.[37] Most noteworthy of these was the school of Jundishapur in addition to non-Christian schools, particularly that of the Sabians of Harran (Ibn Taymiyya's hometown, incidentally). The intellectual languages used throughout the region were predominantly Syriac and Greek.[38] Thus, the dominant intellectual strand in the area ruled by the early

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[36] Watt observes that the "discussion of the roots of jurisprudence affected the whole future course of Islamic thought, for jurisprudence was the central intellectual discipline in the Islamic world." Watt, *Formative Period*, 181. It has likewise been suggested that the formative legal training of most early theologians naturally predisposed them to apply to their theological reflections the habits of mind they had acquired in their study of *fiqh*. Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 44. For the most recent treatment of the origins of the style of argumentation used in *kalām* theology, see Treiger, "Origins of *Kalām*," 29–34.

[37] Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 37.

[38] On the linguistic situation of the Near East in the early Islamic period, see Versteegh, *Greek Elements*, 1–4.

Muslim state was Hellenism in its Syriac expression, admixed with Indic elements transmitted through Old Persian, or Pahlavi.[39]

The Muslims thus came to rule a vast conglomeration of peoples and cultures teeming with Persian, Indian, Greek, and other philosophies and beliefs that were often radically at odds with Islamic teachings. Such doctrines included Mazdaism, Manichaeism, materialism (*dahriyya*),[40] the doctrines of the Sumaniyya of Central Asia,[41] and others. In this early period, as Muslims came into contact with educated non-Muslims who often argued against Islamic teachings, Muslims found themselves in need of tools to defend—in universally acceptable terms—the underlying reasonability and plausibility of their creed. This was true especially with respect to the Christians, who not only formed the majority of the populace, particularly in the region of Greater Syria, but who also represented a rival monotheism with a similarly universalist outlook. Moreover, competing Christian theological claims were couched in a sophisticated intellectual idiom that resulted from over six hundred years during which Christian thought had been infused with Greek philosophy, particularly in the form of a late Hellenic Neoplatonism combined with certain Aristotelian and Stoic elements as well.[42] The early Muslims were primed to engage in such debates by virtue of the "dialectical way of thinking"[43] that they had learned not only from the Qurʾān and prophetic practice but also from the early, indigenous Islamic disciplines of *tafsīr*, grammar, *ḥadīth*, and law mentioned above.[44] But these tendencies were now reinforced and supplemented by the new cultural milieu of the lands that the Arabs had come to control (and from which the non-Arab converts originally hailed). The immediate effect of this cultural and intellectual interaction was the adoption by Muslim theologians of certain concepts and methods they deemed necessary to answer their rivals and to present Islam in what was taken to be the neutral canons of a universally shared rational discourse. Greek concepts in particular—as well as Greek methods of argumentation, such as formal disputation[45]—were powerful tools that could be deployed for the defense of Islam in the context of strident inter-confessional debate. The overall result of this polemical rencontre was that both the methods and, to a considerable extent, even the content and problems of *kalām* theology as developed by the late second/eighth century bear the distinct imprint of these early exchanges in which Muslim debaters were compelled to adapt themselves to the categories of their opponents.[46]

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[39] The influence of Hellenism was found chiefly in Iraq, first Basra and Kufa, then Baghdad. The regions farther to the east had also long been exposed to Hellenistic culture, but not much is known about the rationalizing theological activity there prior to the theologian Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. ca. 333/944). See Watt, *Formative Period*, 184. On the rise of Māturīdī theology, see Rudolph, "Das Entstehen der Māturīdīya"; Rudolph, "Ḥanafī Theological Tradition and Māturīdism," 285–293; and, more extensively, Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie in Samarkand* (trans. Adem, *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand*). Alternative death dates for al-Māturīdī have been given as 332/943 or 336/947. See Madelung, "al-Māturīdī," *EI*², 6:846a.

[40] On the Dahriyya, see Crone, "Excursus II: Ungodly Cosmologies," 115–123.

[41] Primarily in Tirmidh and Samarqand. The early figure Jahm b. Ṣafwān (see p. 34 below) may have taken certain extreme positions in theology primarily in response to this group, who may have been Buddhists of some sort.

[42] For an analysis of the Stoic influences on early Islamic theological thought, see van Ess, "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology," esp. 26–42.

[43] "*dialektische*[*r*] *Denkstil*," van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 1:48–49. See also van Ess, 1:55 for the observation that not only in the Qurʾān but also in the *Sīra* of Ibn Isḥāq (d. ca. 150/767) can we begin to detect a *kalām* style of argumentation. For a critique of van Ess and a different perspective on the sources and dates of *kalām*, see Cook, "Origins of Kalam" (also discussed in Treiger, "Origins of *Kalām*" 30–31).

It is in the context of this intellectual backdrop that the first full-fledged, properly speculative theological discussions in Islam took place.[47] The first such debate revolved around the question of free will and determinism and influenced the manner in which various other questions of dogma were conceived and debated.[48] This debate concerned the issue of whether human beings have free choice in their moral action or whether their deeds are inexorably predetermined by God. Advocating for the first position were the

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[44] Watt suggests that the receptivity of Muslim scholars to the use of Greek rational methods once these became available may have been a result of their training in Islamic jurisprudence, through which they had already become familiar with various forms of rational argumentation. Watt, *Formative Period*, 180.

[45] Cook, "Origins of Kalam" and Jack Tannous, "Between Christology and Kalām?" trace the dialectical method of early *kalām* specifically to Syriac Christological disputations that took place in the second half of the seventh century. Tannous suggests that this methodology may have been transmitted to the early Muslim community via Arab Christian communities in Iraq and Syria. (See Treiger, "Origins of *Kalām*," 30–32.)

[46] Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 1:52–53. For a detailed discussion of these exchanges, see Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalam*, 1–43, 64–66.

[47] Blankinship, "Early Creed," 38.

[48] The extent to which early Muslim theological debates may have been due to Christian or other outside influences is a matter of debate. For a fairly extensive discussion of Western scholars' (highly variable) views on this issue, see Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalam*, 58–64 and, more recently, Treiger, "Origins of *Kalām*," 29–34. (On the origins of the debate over free will in particular, see Treiger, 34–38.) Steven Judd ("Early Qadariyya," 46) remarks that modern scholars who attribute Christian origins to the debate on free will do so, to some extent, in keeping with medieval Arabic sources but suggests that these sources' own ascription of a Christian origin to the debate was likely "more polemical than theological." See also Judd, 48, 50, 53.

Qadarīs (or Qadariyya),[49] a group purportedly started by Maʿbad al-Juhanī (executed 80/699), a well-regarded *ḥadīth* transmitter whose father was a Companion of the Prophet. The single common point of doctrine unifying the Qadariyya seems to have been their assertion of human volition in moral acts (particularly sinful ones). The famous al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728)—a figure universally revered by later schools of law, theology, and Sufism[50]—likewise spoke forcefully in favor of a person's ability to choose to sin (or not) and his consequent responsibility for his sin, arguing that God creates only good while evil stems either from man himself or from Satan.[51] The early Muʿtazila subsequently developed the Qadarī stress on human volition into a more robust doctrine of free will, one in which human moral responsibility was held to depend on the fact that men not only chose and performed (*faʿala*) their actions but positively "created" (*khalaqa*) them as well. This view was widely denounced as compromising the unique status of God as the only Creator (*khāliq*) and instantiator of all that exists. The Qadarīs, whose doctrine was less formally developed, became embroiled in politics, and their cause was taken up for a brief time on the occasion of a political revolt against the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd b. Yazīd (al-Walīd II) in the year 126/744.[52] The Qadarī cause was eclipsed, however, with the eventual political failure of the movement. The opposite, "*jabrī*" impulse tended towards a strict determinism and categorical denial of human free will. This side of the debate was represented in its most extreme form by Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/746), whose views on the issue seem to have been supported by the ruling Umayyads. Some have speculated that the Umayyads favored the *jabrī* doctrine as a way of excusing their actions as simply the result of God's determinative will and for which they could not be held morally (or politically) accountable.[53]

The second major debate was the abstruse and perplexing question of God's relationship to the Qurʾān as His word. Specifically, this question concerned whether the Qurʾān, as God's speech, was to be considered an "attribute" of the divine essence and therefore eternal (*qadīm*) or, rather, separate from God's essence and thus contingent and temporally originated (*muḥdath*)—or, as it was eventually described, "created" (*makhlūq*).[54] First formulated by al-Jaʿd b. Dirham[55] and subsequently propagated by his student, Jahm b. Ṣafwān,[56] the notion that the Qurʾān was not eternal but created may have been an attempt to safeguard the notion of God's exclusive eternity in the face of Christian claims of Jesus's divinity on the basis of his status as God's word (*kalimat Allāh*), or logos.[57] Yet the notion of a "created Qurʾān" appears, by all accounts, to have stoked the ire of almost all contemporary Muslim scholars and, in fact, was deemed so pernicious a doctrine that it served to justify the execution of both al-Jaʿd b. Dirham and Jahm b. Ṣafwān. The debate on the nature of the Qurʾān became one of the most pivotal and divisive issues in early Muslim theology, and it formed the crux of a major showdown between theological "rationalists" and "textualists" in the mid-third/ninth century. The question of the Qurʾān is also central to the concerns of this study because it relates directly to the question of the divine attributes—a question that forms the spine of Islamic theology and that lies at the very heart of Ibn Taymiyya's main preoccupation in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*.

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[49] The name "Qadarī" for this movement may seem counterintuitive, since *qadar* is almost always used with reference to God's divine decree. Judd suggests that *qadar* here, however, may have been meant as a reference to *human beings*' ability (*qadar*) to determine and choose their own actions. Judd, "Early Qadariyya," 45.

[50] On al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and the multifaceted (and often contradictory) ways in which he is presented in early and medieval Islamic sources, see Mourad, *Early Islam between Myth and History*.

[51] Blankinship, "Early Creed," 39.

[52] Al-Walīd II was killed during this turmoil in April 126/744; this brought an end to his brief, one-year reign (which had begun only in February of the preceding year, 125/743).

[53] See, e.g., Blankinship, "Early Creed," 38–39; Judd, "Early Qadariyya," 51.

Several comments of a conceptual character are in order here regarding the nature and implications of these early debates, which manifest a distinct progression in terms of their abstraction, their use of a formal philosophical nomenclature, and the degree to which their protagonists explicitly appealed to reason as the arbiter of competing theological claims. The first of these debates, the debate over free will and predestination, involved a crucial aspect of the relationship between man and God and directly implicated revelation inasmuch as it was related to different ways of interpreting scriptural assertions about God. This debate, though initially motivated by political events, involved the nature of God and turned on what was implied by certain discrete statements in revelation concerning that nature. The proponents of free will (Qadarīs) reasoned that since God is just,[58] human beings must be acting freely as the authors and creators of their own deeds; this is necessary for their reward or punishment in the hereafter to be just. By contrast, the proponents of determinism (Jabrīs) reasoned that if God is all-powerful,[59] then His power must extend—as the Qurʾān so clearly seems to state—to *all* things, including the actions of human beings. Were it not so, we might reason, then God would not be "powerful over all things."

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[54] For an in-depth account of the issue of the createdness of the Qurʾān, see the classic article of Wilferd Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran." A useful shorter survey can be found in El-Bizri, "God: Essence and Attributes," 122–131. In addition to the view that the Qurʾān must be either "created" (*makhlūq*) or else eternal (*qadīm*), there is an important intermediate position, critical to Ibn Taymiyya's view on the issue, that the Qurʾān is "non-created" (*ghayr makhlūq*). See Hoover, "Perpetual Creativity," 296.

[55] Executed by Khālid al-Qasrī sometime during his reign as governor of Iraq (105–120/724–738). See Judd, "Jaʿd b. Dirham," *Encyclopaedia of Islam—Three* [hereafter EI³] (2016-5), 150.

[56] On whom see Schöck, "Jahm b. Ṣafwān."

[57] See Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 38 on the probable origin of this discussion in the Christian challenge of the logos. It is of note that not only Christian theology but also the Qurʾān itself describes Jesus as "a word from Him [God]" (Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:45). The early Muslims must have felt a pressing need to explain such verses in a manner consistent with Islamic monotheism in the face of Christian trinitarianism, particularly since it was the Christian understanding of the concept of the logos—ostensibly (in Christian eyes) embraced by the Qurʾān as well—that underpinned the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Jesus. For the challenge of the "Sumaniyya" of Tirmidh, who may have been Buddhists, and their possible influence on the highly abstract and transcendentalizing theology of Jahm b. Ṣafwān, see Nagel, *History*, 101–102.

The debate over free will is conceptually foundational for two reasons. First, it illustrates the manner in which early theological debate grew out of differing interpretations of the Qurʾān that emerged once questions were raised that had not been posed in the time of the Prophet or addressed explicitly by revelation. These questions left later protagonists to search for answers to new quandaries in the verses of the Qurʾān.[60] The second reason for the importance of the debate over free will is largely historical insofar as it discloses—now in the realm of theology—the same emerging fault line between two distinct epistemological approaches to revelation that had appeared earlier in the domains of Qurʾān exegesis, grammar, *ḥadīth*, and law and that soon pitted faction against faction in a bitter ideological tussle that raged throughout the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries. The question of free will is thus foundational because it is the first instance of debate that clearly shows a transposition onto the theological plane of the nascent rationalist–textualist cleavage already operative in the other Islamic disciplines.

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[58] Numerous Qurʾānic verses affirm, for instance, that God never does any injustice unto His servants. See, for instance, Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:108 ("And God wills no wrong for the worlds [i.e., His creation]"), *al-Kahf* 18:49 ("And your Lord does wrong unto none"), and *Fuṣṣilat* 41:46 ("And your Lord is in no wise unjust to [His] slaves"). Numerous other passages affirm that God does not wrong His servants, but rather they do wrong unto themselves. See, e.g., Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:117; *al-Tawba* 9:70; *Hūd* 11:101; *al-Naḥl* 16:33, 16:118; *al-ʿAnkabūt* 29:40; *al-Rūm* 30:9; and *al-Zukhruf* 43:76.

[59] As per numerous verses of the Qurʾān, such as *al-Kahf* 18:45: "And God has power over all things." See also Q. *al-Aḥzāb* 33:27, *Fāṭir* 35:44, and *al-Zukhruf* 43:42.

[60] It is important, however, to underscore that the difference of opinion in this instance reflects not so much a "rational" exegesis of the text in contrast to an unreflective "literalism" but rather a differential emphasis placed on contradistinctive descriptions of God found in revelation. The Qurʾān asserts that God is just; it likewise asserts that He is all-powerful. Revelation affirms both statements unequivocally, yet the implications of this twin affirmation for the question of the freedom or determinism of human action, once posed in this manner, are not elaborated, or even adumbrated, in the Qurʾān. It is the challenge of the theologian somehow to articulate an understanding of God that coherently and judiciously accounts for *all* the various contradistinct attributes and qualities predicated of Him in revelation.

The question of freedom and determinism, then, is essentially an exegetical debate cast in moral-ethical terms, both in the sense that it carries implications for human moral responsibility and in the sense that it attempts to account rationally, in human ethical terms, for God's justice in the face of His unbounded might. This question stands in contrast to the debate concerning the nature of the Qurʾān as the word of God, which involves more abstract considerations of an explicitly metaphysical and ontological order. That is, what was at stake in this debate was not whether God had spoken the Qurʾān and what this might entail for human ethical, moral, and spiritual life but rather the very nature of God's being, His relationship to His word, and the nuanced ontological questions pertaining to God's essence, His attributes, and so forth. Furthermore, the *terms* in which this latter debate was conceived and the conceptual framework on the basis of which the problem itself was defined and discussed—"essence," "attributes," and so on—are a direct result of the influence of Greek philosophy and the discussions with Hellenized Christian theologians in Syria and elsewhere. In such discussions, proto-Muʿtazilī, rationalistically inclined theologians appealed directly and explicitly to reason (*ʿaql*) and sought to adopt a consistent methodological rationalism as their choice method of inquiry. This rationalism was meant not merely to serve the hermeneutic objective of interpreting scriptural passages related to the nature of God but also to further the quasi-philosophical goal of delineating a conception of God's nature in entirely rational terms and independently of the "constraints" of revelation.

Thus, the debate over the ontological status of the Qurʾān introduced into theological discussion, for the first time, a level of speculative abstraction (supplied by outside sources) that came to form a particular rational optic through which revelation was henceforth to be refracted. With the debate on the status of the Qurʾān, we are no longer grappling with an intertextual, purely hermeneutical enterprise that is fully contained within the textual bounds of revelation. Rather, for the first time, we are witness to a speculative theological venture that makes claims in its own right, and independently of revelation, about how the nature of God "must be" according to the dictates of reason. This venture represented a systematic attempt to mold the understanding of revelation to the contours of a rational framework that would henceforth dictate, on its own authority, the essential terms of analysis.

3.1 *The Translation Movement and the Impact of Greek Philosophy*

Despite the centrality of personal contact with a living philosophical tradition and with Hellenized Christian theologians in the early Islamic period, the influence of Greek ideas on Muslim thought eventually came primarily—and profusely—in the form of Arabic translations of the Greek philosophical corpus, made directly from Greek originals or from intermediate Syriac translations.[61] Although some Greek works—particularly medical and scientific treatises—were translated in late Umayyad times (that is, in the first half of the second/eighth century, before the Abbasid revolution of 132/750), it was not until well after the consolidation of Abbasid rule that the large-scale project of translation came into full swing. The Abbasid revolution brought about far-reaching changes on a number of levels, spelling a new era for *kalām* as well as for a host of other intellectual disciplines and cultural pursuits. Politically, the capital of the Muslim *umma* moved from Damascus to Baghdad, whereafter Syria and the Hijaz were no longer centers of innovative theological development.[62] Under the new order, religious knowledge and its cultivators received new prominence as the Abbasids explicitly promoted themselves as the defenders of a multiethnic and specifically Islamic order meant to supersede the Umayyad order, which was based on the ethnic favoritism of Arabs.[63] Such circumstances inaugurated an unprecedented efflorescence of *kalām*, the technique of which was developed primarily in Iraq in an atmosphere favorable to theological debate and with the patronage of the Abbasid authorities.[64] Indeed, it was primarily at the caliphal court, where thinkers from various regions and intellectual proclivities regularly comingled, that the new theology was most highly refined and developed into a sophisticated arm of intellectual disputation.[65]

Although *kalām* as a discrete discipline was already firmly established by the time of the illustrious Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/786–809) and although the term *mutakallim* is applied in the literature to some figures even before this period, information about the views of these early theologians is so scant that we cannot draw firm conclusions regarding their individual doctrines. In any case, it was the translation movement—particularly after the founding of the Bayt al-Ḥikma, or "House of Wisdom," as a public institution in Baghdad by the Abbasid caliph Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Maʾmūn (r. 198–218/813–833)—that seems to have constituted the major impetus for the dramatic political rise of the first theological school proper, that of the Muʿtazila.

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[61] For a comprehensive treatment of the translation movement and the transmission of Greek learning into early Arab-Islamic society, see Gutas, *Greek Thought*. Also informative is Endreß, "Athen, Alexandria, Bagdad, Samarkand."

[62] Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 1:56.

[63] See the discussion in Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 39–41.

[64] Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 1:55.

[65] Ibid., 1:56.

TABLE 1 Timeline of the development of the reason–revelation dichotomy in Islam before Ibn Taymiyya

610 CE–AH 11/632 CE	The Qurʾān encourages use of reason to arrive at faith; simultaneously declares reason limited.
mid-first/seventh c.	Beginnings of the sciences of Qurʾānic exegesis, Arabic grammar, law, and *ḥadīth*.
41/661 and after	Capital of emerging Islamic empire moved to the cosmopolitan environment of Damascus.
	Muslims increasingly exposed to Hellenistic, Christian, Persian, and other influences, causing early theologians to adopt some Greek methods and vocabulary to defend Islamic belief.
late first/seventh c.	Rise of the debate over free will and predestination.
early second/eighth c.	Rise of the debate over the createdness of the Qurʾān.
early to mid-second/eighth c.	Some Greek texts, primarily medical and scientific, translated into Arabic.
	Emergence of methodological division in law between *ahl al-raʾy* and *ahl al-ḥadīth*.
	Beginnings of Muʿtazilī school at the hands of Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ and ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd.
132/750	Abbasid revolution. Capital of empire moved from Damascus to Baghdad. Theological speculation given new impetus under Abbasid rule.
early third/ninth c.	Bayt al-Ḥikma ("House of Wisdom") founded in Baghdad by the caliph al-Maʾmūn (r. 198–218/813–833). Massive translation of Greek philosophical texts begins.
	Al-Shāfiʿī synthesizes methodologies of *ahl al-raʾy* and *ahl al-ḥadīth* by consecrating rational *qiyās*, along with firm adherence to *ḥadīth*, as basis of the law.
ca. 205–235/820–850	Flourishing of the major architects of Muʿtazilī theology. Assimilation of numerous Greek concepts and methods of argumentation.
218–232/833–847	*Miḥna* instituted by three consecutive Abbasid caliphs in an attempt to impose the Muʿtazilī doctrine of the createdness of the Qurʾān as official doctrine.
early to mid-third/ninth c.	Al-Kindī, first Muslim philosopher, flourishes. Shows clear Islamic doctrinal commitments, especially on the question of the non-eternality of the world, but his method is that of *falsafa*.
	Al-Muḥāsibī and Ibn Kullāb active, both of whom shun Muʿtazilī doctrine but begin using systematic rational methods to defend transmitted Sunnī orthodoxy.

TABLE 1 The development of the reason–revelation dichotomy in Islam (*cont.*)

ca. 233–237/848–851	The caliph al-Wāthiq turns on the Muʿtazila, ends the *miḥna*, and reinstates Sunnī orthodoxy. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal emerges as a hero for his refusal to capitulate to the inquisition.
second half of third/ninth c.	Influence of the theological style of al-Muḥāsibī and Ibn Kullāb spreads, complemented by the similar work of figures like Ibn Qutayba and al-Qalānisī.
first half of fourth/tenth c.	Emergence of the traditionalist creed of al-Ṭaḥāwī. Active period of other traditionalist voices, such as al-Ṭabarī and Ḥanbalīs like al-Khallāl, al-Barbahārī, and Ibn Khuzayma.
	Al-Ashʿarī breaks from the Muʿtazila at age forty but uses their rational method to launch a full-fledged defense of inherited orthodox creed.
	Al-Fārābī flourishes. Explicitly theorizes the outward sense of revelation as being for the masses only.
late fourth/tenth to early fifth/eleventh c.	Al-Bāqillānī flourishes in the second generation after al-Ashʿarī, strongly reinforcing the foundations of Ashʿarī thought and bringing the “old doctrine” of the school to its highest point.
early to mid-fifth/eleventh c.	Active period of Ibn Sīnā, whose philosophical system exercises a major impact on *kalām* and practically all subsequent Islamic thought.
mid- to late fifth/eleventh c.	Flourishing of al-Juwaynī, first Ashʿarī theologian to feel the full force of Ibn Sīnā’s influence. Considered a crossover figure between early and later Ashʿarī school.
late fifth/eleventh to early sixth/twelfth c.	Al-Ghazālī pens scathing attack on the philosophers but incorporates logical methods of *falsafa* into theology and legal theory. Explicitly endorses *taʾwīl*. Adopts certain esotericist doctrines as well.
second half of sixth/twelfth c.	Ibn Rushd flourishes. Defends Aristotelianism and responds to al-Ghazālī point for point. Writes *Faṣl al-maqāl* on the necessity of upholding the literal sense of revelation for the common people while reserving the real truth, gained through reason, for the philosophical elite.
	Flourishing of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, seminal figure of the later Ashʿarī school whose work represents a sophisticated philosophical theology. Al-Rāzī further elaborates the universal rule of interpretation articulated by al-Ghazālī and targeted by Ibn Taymiyya in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*.
	Active period of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī and rise of the Ishrāqī, or “Illuminationist,” school of philosophy.
first half of seventh/thirteenth c.	Flourishing of Ibn ʿArabī, seminal figure in later Sufi thought, strongly criticized by Ibn Taymiyya for his monistic ontology.
661–728/1263–1328	Life and work of Ibn Taymiyya.

4 The Muʿtazila

The first speculations of the Muʿtazila can be traced back to the last decade of the Umayyad dynasty, just prior to the Abbasid revolution.[66] The origin of Muʿtazilī thought is normally attributed to Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/748 or 749)—who is said to have separated from (*iʿtazala*) the circle of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī over the question of the status of the grave sinner[67]—and to Wāṣil's contemporary ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd (d. 144/761), though the main architects of the school died several generations later, between 204/820 and 224/840. In terms of methodology, the early Muʿtazila seem to have relied principally on the styles of reasoning and argumentation that had been developed in the indigenous Islamic sciences of Arabic grammar and law,[68] as well as Qurʾān exegesis and *ḥadīth*.[69] Eventually, however, the mature Muʿtazilī school reinforced its intellectual armature by adopting numerous aspects of Greek reasoning and methods of argumentation over the course of early Abbasid rule.[70]

Of the famous so-called five principles (*al-uṣūl al-khamsa*) of the Muʿtazila[71]—first articulated, most likely, by Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. between 226/840 and 235/850)[72]—the most important for our topic is the first principle, involving the notion of *tawḥīd*, since it touches directly on the question of the divine attributes, one of Ibn Taymiyya's overriding preoccupations in the *Darʾ*. The three main aspects of the Muʿtazilī notion of *tawḥīd* are (1) the denial of the distinctiveness of the essential attributes of God, such as knowledge, power, and speech; (2) the denial of the eternality (*qidam*), or "uncreatedness," of the Qurʾān; and (3) the radical denial of resemblance between God and any created thing (*tanzīh*).[73] Indeed, the doctrines the Muʿtazila most vehemently opposed were predestination and anthropomorphism,[74] the latter of which they regularly sought to neutralize through figurative interpretation, or *taʾwīl*.

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[66] Van Ess, *Flowering*, 123. For an overview of the scholarship on the origins and rise of the Muʿtazila, see el-Omari, "The Muʿtazilite Movement (I)," 152–154.

[67] Sarah Stroumsa, however, makes a plausible argument in support of Goldziher's thesis that the name "Muʿtazila," derived from the verb *iʿtazala*, is in reference to the asceticism of the movement's founders (and, hence, their *iʿtizāl* of—or separation from and renunciation of—the world). See Stroumsa, "The Beginnings of the Muʿtazila Reconsidered."

[68] Blankinship, "Early Creed," 50–51.

[69] Daiber, *Islamic Thought in the Dialogue of Cultures*, 19.

[70] See Blankinship, "Early Creed," 50–51.

[71] On which see Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 48–53, as well as Bennett, "Muʿtazilite Movement (II)," 146–147 and 152–156.

[72] Blankinship, "Early Creed," 47.

[73] Watt, *Formative Period*, 242. On the Muʿtazilī conception of the divine attributes, see also Bennett, "Muʿtazilite Movement (II)," 152–154.

In addition to these five principles, Muʿtazilī thinkers were also united by an apologetic program that was motivated by a common zeal to defend the core doctrines of Islam against the arguments put forth by the adherents of other religions, as well as against groups of their Muslim co-religionists whom they deemed to have compromised God's unique and incomparable nature by clinging to what they (the Muʿtazila) considered an overly literal and, therefore, overtly anthropomorphic understanding of scripture. Most important to our topic is the way in which Muʿtazilī thinkers sought to realize this defensive project through a shared interpretive methodology that consisted in applying reason (as they conceived of it) as rigorously and consistently as possible to all questions of a theological nature, even if—critically—the conclusions they reached ended up contradicting the plain sense of the Qurʾānic text.

The Muʿtazila, through their theological and polemical engagements, adopted a large number of Greek concepts and methods of reasoning and argumentation, leaving it to later scholars to sift through the spoils to determine which of these were truly assimilable to Islamic thought. As a result of this process, many ideas were retained and absorbed into Sunnī *kalām*, such that Greek ideas "came to dominate one great wing of Islamic theology, namely, rational or philosophical theology."[75] Yet since the majority of Sunnī scholars generally regarded the Muʿtazila as heretics, Muʿtazilī doctrines and theses could not simply be taken over by mainstream thought, at least not in the same form in which the Muʿtazila had presented them. The result was that such ideas often exercised only an indirect influence—a reality that Ibn Taymiyya sensed acutely and that, in fact, he held responsible for a great deal of what had "gone wrong" in later Islamic theology.[76] Thus, although the Muʿtazilī school was eventually defeated, it nevertheless influenced permanently not only the form of, but also the problems dealt with, in all subsequent *kalām*.

5 Non-speculative Theology and the Legacy of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal

Throughout the third/ninth century, there were a number of figures who upheld conservative doctrinal positions but who nevertheless engaged to some extent, even if by way of refutation and disavowal, with the newly developing science of (Muʿtazilī) *kalām*. Indeed, the fifth-/eleventh-century Ashʿarī theologian ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037 or 1038) includes in his *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn* a section on the "*mutakallimūn* of *ahl al-sunna*," among whom some were prominent in the science of *ḥadīth*.[77] For our purposes, then, a "theologian" is not strictly a rationalist theologian in the way of the Muʿtazila but anyone who explicitly and consciously articulated views on the pressing theological matters of the day, regardless of the extent to which he may or may not have relied on or articulated his views in terms of the rationalistic framework of the emerging science of *kalām*. It is precisely such men who took explicit stands on theological issues, albeit while consciously avoiding or openly opposing the rationalistic program of the Muʿtazila, that I refer to as "non-speculative theologians" and whose style of engagement in theological debates I have labeled "non-speculative theology."[78]

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[74] Van Ess, *Flowering*, 31.

[75] Watt, *Formative Period*, 249.

[76] See below, p. 102 ff. on Ibn Taymiyya's understanding and assessment of the intellectual tradition he inherited.

The non-speculative approach to theology, which eventually came to be most closely associated with the Ḥanbalī school,[79] was, in fact, favored—especially before the triumphant rise of the Ashʿarī and Māturīdī style of *kalām* in the fifth/eleventh century—by a substantial number of scholars from all the major legal schools. This was particularly true of early Mālikī and Shāfiʿī scholars, but it also holds for a number of prominent early Ḥanafīs, who, in legal matters, tended to accord a greater role to reasoned opinion (*raʾy*) and other extra-textual methods, such as *istiḥsān* (juristic preference), that were often disapproved of by other schools. So although a certain strand of Ḥanafīs accepted *kalām* and the conclusions to which it led and although a number of prominent Muʿtazilīs were also Ḥanafī in legal *madhhab* (pl. *madhāhib*), it is by no means the case that the early Ḥanafīs were, as a group, automatically or immediately inclined to theological rationalism.[80] Indeed, there is a contrasting, more cautious Ḥanafī attitude that was apprehensive of rationalistic *kalām*, as evidenced by the famous creed of Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933), a prominent Ḥanafī authority and leading scholar of *ḥadīth* who, in general, insisted on hewing closely to the terms of the Qurʾān and Sunna.[81]

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[77] Watt, *Formative Period*, 279. See ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*, 333–334. Al-Baghdādī identifies two figures as the "first *mutakallimūn* of *ahl al-sunna*" among the Companions: ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, on account of his theological disputations with the Khawārij and the Qadariyya, and ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar (d. 73/693), also for his debates with the Qadariyya. Among the first *mutakallimūn* of *ahl al-sunna* in the generation of the Successors al-Baghdādī identifies ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 101/720), Zayd b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 122/740; the great-grandson of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib), al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, al-Shaʿbī (d. between 104/722 or 723 and 106/724 or 725), and al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), followed by Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) in the following generation. Finally, as the first *mutakallimūn* among the jurists and authorities (*arbāb*) of the legal schools he names Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) and al-Shāfiʿī, followed by the students of al-Shāfiʿī "who combined knowledge of law (*fiqh*) and theology (*kalām*)." These students of al-Shāfiʿī include specifically al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), Abū ʿAlī al-Karābīsī (d. 245/859 or 248/862), Abū Yaʿqūb al-Buwayṭī (d. 231/846), Ḥarmala b. Yaḥyā (d. 243/858), and Dāwūd al-Aṣbahānī (al-Ẓāhirī) (d. 270/884). [N.B.: Al-Baghdādī lists "Ḥarmala al-Buwayṭī," but "Ḥarmala" and "al-Buwayṭī" are, in fact, two separate figures. I have listed them both here, though it is not altogether clear whether al-Baghdādī meant to list both or just one of them.]

[78] The term "non-speculative theology" I employ here is roughly equivalent in scope and implication to the Arabic term *uṣūl al-dīn*, which refers in a general sense to Islamic creedal commitments and their foundations (*uṣūl*)—both scriptural and rational—without, however, implying a commitment to or an endorsement of the particular rationalistic approach and dialectical style normally implied by the term *kalām*.

[79] On the formation and development of Ḥanbalī thought, especially as a theological orientation, see Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," esp. 627–630.

The final piece of the puzzle on the third-/ninth-century Islamic theological scene is represented by those who opposed the methods and conclusions of (Muʿtazilī) *kalām* outright but who nevertheless put forward explicit doctrines on controversial issues of theology. In general, such men belonged to the group that the sources designate as *ahl al-ḥadīth*, the most influential of whom was Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855),[82] founder of the fourth Sunnī legal school, of which Ibn Taymiyya was a loyal adherent.[83] Ibn Taymiyya, as we shall see, has much praise for Ibn Ḥanbal's keen intellect, a judgement shared by contemporary Western scholars such as Watt, who says of Ibn Ḥanbal that "he was clearly a man of powerful intellect capable of adopting a coherent view in matters of great complexity."[84] On the other hand, Watt's claim—typical of an earlier generation of Western scholarship—that Ibn Ḥanbal "rejected [altogether] the rational methods of the Mutakallimūn and insisted on deriving religious doctrines and legal rules solely from the Qurʾān and the Traditions"[85] must be nuanced in light of more recent studies. Binyamin Abrahamov, for instance, has shown that many in the traditionalist camp indeed used rational arguments—sometimes even *kalām*-style proofs—in addition to direct appeals to the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* in order to establish a given point of theology.[86] Ibn Taymiyya, incidentally, makes a very similar point, as we explore further in chapter 2.[87]

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[80] On the "traditionalization" of the Ḥanafī school in the third/ninth century, see Melchert, *Formation*, 54–60.

[81] Watt, *Formative Period*, 284. Watt mentions this specifically with regard to whether the verbalization (*lafẓ*) of the Qurʾān during recitation is "created" or "uncreated," though al-Ṭaḥāwī's circumspection on this issue can be generalized to his approach as a whole. For a translation of al-Ṭaḥāwī's creed with an extensive introduction and notes, see Hamza Yusuf, *The Creed of Imam al-Ṭaḥāwī*. On the development of theology among Ḥanafīs from the time of Abū Ḥanīfa through the founding of the Māturīdī school in the fourth/tenth century, see Rudolph, "Ḥanafī Theological Tradition and Māturīdism."

[82] On whom see especially Melchert, *Ahmad ibn Hanbal*.

[83] With some qualifications, as discussed in chapter 2.

[84] Watt, *Formative Period*, 291.

Prominent Ḥanbalīs of this period include Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d. 311/923), al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Barbahārī (d. 329/941), and Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/924). Yet not all *ḥadīth* scholars who took public positions on theological matters were followers of Ibn Ḥanbal. Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), for instance, who lived about one generation after Ibn Ḥanbal, deemed himself a member of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* but not necessarily a follower of Ibn Ḥanbal, whom he considered "only one of at least a dozen distinguished scholars of this party."[88] The famous Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), known primarily for his forty-volume historical chronicle[89] but who also founded a legal school (which, however, did not survive in the long run), also held theological views that were, by and large, very close to those held by this group of scholars. Nevertheless, al-Ṭabarī is not usually thought of as a Ḥanbalī, and, in fact, he drew the ire of the Ḥanbalīs in the last year or so of his life, apparently for conceding certain Muʿtazilī theses regarding some of the seemingly anthropomorphic passages of the Qurʾān.[90] These various names and tendencies serve to demonstrate the extent to which there existed "orthodox," primarily non-speculative Sunnī (as opposed to Muʿtazilī) theologians even before the time of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī in the early fourth/tenth century.

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[85] Ibid.

[86] See Abrahamov, "Scripturalist and Traditionalist Theology," 273–274, where he details Ibn Ḥanbal's use of the *kalām* argument from disjunction (*taqsīm*) to prove the impossibility of God's being present (i.e., in His essence, as opposed to with His knowledge) in each and every place.

[87] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 7:154, lines 7–8 in reference to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's use of definitive proofs (*adilla qaṭʿiyya*) based in both reason (*ʿaql*) and revelation (*naql*).

[88] Watt, *Formative Period*, 296.

[89] Entitled *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* (History of prophets and kings).

[90] See van Ess, *Flowering*, 60–61.

6 The *Miḥna* and Its Aftermath

The clash between Muʿtazilī rationalistic theology, on the one hand, and the non-speculative, or minimally speculative, amodal adherence to the overt meaning of scripture (as propounded by the founders of the main Sunnī legal schools, master *ḥadīth* critics, and figures like al-Baghdādī's *mutakallimūn* of *ahl al-sunna*), on the other hand, came to a head in the first half of the third/ninth century with the infamous *miḥna*, or "inquisition."[91] At issue in the *miḥna* was the highly contentious question encountered above concerning the "createdness" of the Qurʾān. Though remembered primarily as a theological dispute, the *miḥna* had important political ramifications and was symptomatic of a wider struggle for legitimacy and religious authority between the office of the caliph and the collective body of religious scholars, or *ʿulamāʾ*.[92] During the reign of three successive Abbasid caliphs,[93] all religious scholars, judges, and other notables, particularly in Baghdad and its immediate environs, were forced publicly to endorse the Muʿtazilī doctrine that the Qurʾān was "created" (*makhlūq*) rather than eternal (*qadīm*).[94] Those who refused were imprisoned, beaten, and, in some cases, killed. While the vast majority of *ʿulamāʾ* relented under such pressing duress, a few stalwart souls held out, braving torment and humiliation to uphold what was widely considered the orthodox position of the early community (*salaf*) and authoritative scholars (*aʾimma*) of the first two centuries of Islam: namely, that the Qurʾān was the eternal and *uncreated* word of God, an intrinsic and inseparable part of His essence and not a creation extrinsic to the divine being and originated in time like the created universe and all that it contains. Among those few who defied the inquisition authorities and refused to flinch under any circumstances was, most prominently, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.[95]

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[91] For a summary of these events, see Hurvitz, "al-Maʾmūn (r. 198/813–218/833) and the *Miḥna*."

[92] For a discussion of the political dimensions of the *miḥna* and its connection to the struggle over ultimate religious authority, see Zaman, *Religion and Politics*. For a different perspective on the possible causes of the *miḥna*, see Nawas, "Reexamination" and Nawas, "Miḥna."

[93] The first of whom was the caliph al-Maʾmūn (d. 218/833), son of the famed Hārūn al-Rashīd (d. 193/809). On al-Maʾmūn, see Cooperson, *Al-Maʾmun*.

[94] This doctrine was held by a number of Ḥanafīs as well, and it has been argued that the *miḥna* was largely aimed at supporting rationalist and semi-rationalist trends more generally against an "increasingly assertive traditionalism." Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," 628.

[95] The one other person who held out indefinitely—until he finally died in chains while being transported back to Baghdad from the Byzantine border, where he and Ibn Ḥanbal had been interrogated under the caliph's personal supervision—was a scholar by the name of Muḥammad b. Nūḥ al-ʿIjlī (d. 218/833). Melchert, *Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, 11.

In the year 232/847, the tables were turned on the Muʿtazila when the caliph Jaʿfar b. al-Muʿtaṣim al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–247/847–861) succeeded his brother, Abū Jaʿfar al-Wāthiq (r. 227–232/842–847), and deposed the Muʿtazila,[96] removing them from their posts and initiating a downhill spiral from which they never fully recovered. Though the Muʿtazila remained a strong theological (and sometimes political) voice in pockets beyond the central Abbasid lands for several centuries, they became increasingly marginalized from mainstream scholarly discourse.[97]

In the wake of the *miḥna*, a group of theologians emerged in Baghdad whose doctrinal positions were close to the views of Ibn Ḥanbal and of those Ḥanafīs and others who had remained aloof from Muʿtazilī methods and had refused to debate theological issues on the terms set by *kalām*.[98] One figure in this emerging group was the famous early Sufi al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857),[99] a contemporary of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal who, in spite of his essentially traditionalist orientation, nevertheless incurred Ibn Ḥanbal's wrath merely for engaging with the discourse of *kalām* in order to refute it. Ibn Ḥanbal seems to have deemed this engagement in and of itself a dangerous endorsement of the legitimacy of the methods and assumptions of *kalām*.[100] Other figures who engaged in *kalām* discourse at this time include Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Qalānisī[101] and the aforementioned Ibn Qutayba.[102] Ibn Qutayba and al-Muḥāsibī can be understood as treading a middle path between the practitioners of *kalām* as it had developed up to their day and those who refused even to engage with its discourse.[103]

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[96] On the reversal of the *miḥna* and the period immediately succeeding it, see Melchert, "Religious Policies."

[97] Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 53.

[98] It is important to remember that *kalām* at this time was more or less an entirely Muʿtazilī affair, which explains why some were so adamantly opposed to it; it had not yet been integrated into mainstream discourse or rendered "safe" in the eyes of more circumspect, traditionally-minded individuals.

[99] Major studies on al-Muḥāsibī include van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥāriṯ al-Muḥāsibī*; de Crussol, *Le rôle de la raison dans la réflexion éthique d'Al-Muḥāsibī*; and, more recently, Picken, *Spiritual Purification in Islam*. See summary treatment in Bin Ramli, "Predecessors of Ashʿarism," 219–221.

[100] Bin Ramli, "Predecessors of Ashʿarism," 219. On the relationship between al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, see Picken, "Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Muḥāsibī."

[101] The place and dates of al-Qalānisī's birth and death are not known with precision. Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176) describes him as "a contemporary, though not a pupil, of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī" (*min muʿāṣirī Abī al-Ḥasan, raḥimahu Allāh, lā min talāmidhatihi*). See Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tabyīn kadhib al-muftarī*, 398. On al-Qalānisī more generally, see al-Salālī, *Ārāʾ al-Kullābiyya*, 73–78, as well as Gimaret, "Cet autre théologien sunnite" (summarized in Bin Ramli, "Predecessors of Ashʿarism," 221–223).

[102] Regarding the divine attributes, for instance, Ibn Qutayba took the position that God's essence and acts could not be fully comprehended by reason. Rather, the essential reality of such matters lay inherently and irremediably beyond full human comprehension, such

Another theologian of great influence in the period immediately following the *miḥna* was ʿAbd Allāh b. Kullāb (d. ca. 241/855),[104] who played a central role in the movement for the acceptance of *kalām* and its methods among mainstream Sunnīs.[105] Though Ibn Kullāb largely inclined towards the substantive doctrines of the Ḥanbalī-style traditionalists,[106] he is famous for the view—which became standard in subsequent Ashʿarī doctrine—that the divine attributes are neither identical to God nor other than God.[107] In sum, al-Muḥāsibī, Ibn Kullāb, and al-Qalānisī can be seen as the immediate forerunners of al-Ashʿarī; they were "semi-rationalists"[108] who used some measure of *kalām* argumentation in defending (more or less) traditionalist theological positions.[109]

7 Nascent Ashʿarī Thought and the Early *Kalām*

7.1 *al-Ashʿarī*

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935 or 936),[110] a descendent of the famous Companion of the Prophet Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī (d. ca. 42/662),[111] hailed from the city of Basra but spent most of his life in Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid

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that attempting to confine any such truths within perfectly transparent rational categories could only lead to their distortion. Nagel, *History*, 135.

[103] Al-Muḥāsibī, for instance, attempted to respond to the Muʿtazila by "develop[ing] the concept of a certain alignment of God's actions and those of His creatures," that is, by "rationalizing" the divine attributes to some degree—even if slight—in order to bring them more within the range of human rational apprehension. Ibid., 140.

[104] On Ibn Kullāb, see van Ess, "Ibn Kullāb and His School," 263–267. For a more specific discussion of Ibn Kullāb's role in the *miḥna*, see van Ess, "Ibn Kullāb und die Miḥna" (subsequently published in French as "Ibn Kullāb et la Miḥna").

[105] Watt, *Formative Period*, 288.

[106] Bin Ramli, "Predecessors of Ashʿarism," 218.

[107] Ibid., 217.

[108] Ibid., 223–224.

[109] Watt, *Formative Period*, 288; Bin Ramli, "Predecessors of Ashʿarism," 217.

[110] There is some uncertainty concerning al-Ashʿarī's death date. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) reports three possible dates: (1) the 330s/940s; (2) between 320/932 and 330/941; and (3) the precise year 324/935 or 936, which he reports on the authority of Ibn Ḥazm. See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:260. Kaḥḥāla reports the same three dates (the second on the authority of the Ottoman historian and chronicler Taşköprüzade [d. 968/1561]) and concludes that the most likely date is 324/935 or 936. See Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn*, 7:35.

[111] The death date of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī is also a matter of considerable uncertainty, with various dates given in the sources as AH 41, 42, 50, 52, or 53. The most likely date seems to be 42/662. Vaglieri, "al-Ashʿarī, Abū Mūsā," *EI*^{2}, 1:694–696.

empire. In Baghdad, he dedicated himself to the religious sciences, eventually emerging as the top student of the leading Muʿtazilī authority of his day, Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915 or 916). Around the age of forty, al-Ashʿarī experienced an abrupt change of heart after a dream in which the Prophet visited him and urged him to defend the Sunna (as transmitted through *ḥadīth*). Al-Ashʿarī thereupon publicly recanted Muʿtazilī doctrine,[112] completely abandoned the pursuit of *kalām*, and devoted himself exclusively to the study of the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*. In a subsequent vision, however, the Prophet reproved al-Ashʿarī, clarifying that while he had commanded him to defend the doctrines reported on his authority, he had not commanded him to give up rational methods of argumentation. Al-Ashʿarī thus dedicated the remainder of his life to working out a methodology for systematically defending revealed doctrines on the basis of rational argumentation.[113]

Al-Ashʿarī adopted theological positions close to those of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal but sought to support these positions on the basis of reasoned argument.[114] The novelty in al-Ashʿarī's approach can be discerned in the fact that even when, in the course of an argument, he quotes from the Qurʾān, it can be seen that he is building up a "considerable structure of rational argument" around the verses.[115] And while it is true that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal had made some cautious use of rational argumentation, al-Ashʿarī went farther by arguing unapologetically for the legitimacy of systematically defending theological doctrines by means of formal rational argumentation based on the very methods developed and employed by the Muʿtazila, whose substantive theological doctrine he had so resolutely rejected. Al-Ashʿarī even sought to justify this approach by arguing that the Qurʾān itself contained the germ of certain rational methods the Muʿtazila had employed.[116] For this reason, most Ḥanbalīs of al-Ashʿarī's day rejected him and his followers since they, like their leader, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, considered the very use of formalized *kalām* a dangerous capitulation to methods and assumptions that, in and of themselves, were invalid and without foundation.[117]

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[112] For an account of al-Ashʿarī's public dispute with his master, al-Jubbāʾī, that occurred around the same time and that also contributed to his loss of faith in the Muʿtazilī creed, see Fakhry, *History*, 204–205. On the rise of Ashʿarī *kalām* more generally, see Thiele, "Between Cordoba and Nīsābūr."

[113] Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 64–65. For the main differences between Muʿtazilī theology and the theology eventually developed by al-Ashʿarī, see Thiele, "Between Cordoba and Nīsābūr," 226–229.

[114] On al-Ashʿarī's view of the nature and function of reason in theological matters, see Frank, "Al-Ašʿari's Conception."

[115] Watt, *Formative Period*, 307. See also Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 66: "When he [al-Ashʿarī] quotes a verse and argues from it, he is not simply quoting (as some other writers did) but is placing the verse within a setting of rational conceptions, and he has other arguments which do not depend on quotations"—a description that is equally apt for Ibn Taymiyya's methodology.

[116] Nagel, *History*, 152. This is a critical point since Ibn Taymiyya also stresses the Qurʾān's use of rational argumentation and consciously tries to develop a notion of reason that grows out of and is congruent with the Qurʾān.

In terms of substantive doctrine, al-Ashʿarī differed from the Ḥanbalīs in that he took an explicit position on the question of the divine attributes, initially raised by the Muʿtazila,[118] in contrast to the Ḥanbalīs' strict amodal (*bi-lā kayf*) approach. Al-Ashʿarī's position allows some measure of analogy between the attributes of God and those human attributes designated by the same name, in accordance with an attenuated form of the Muʿtazilī principle of *qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid* (or *al-qiyās bi-l-shāhid ʿalā al-ghāʾib*), that is, drawing an analogical inference from the "visible" (*shāhid*) world of our empirical experience to the "invisible" (*ghāʾib*) world of unseen realities that lie beyond our sense perception.[119] By cautiously adopting this principle in a moderated form, al-Ashʿarī tried to steer a middle course between the radical views of the Muʿtazila[120] and those of the strictest Ḥanbalīs.[121] Thomas Nagel sums up al-Ashʿarī's position on the divine attributes by explaining that

> they [the attributes] were not merely some phantom of the necessarily human language of revelation. To be sure, when the Koran spoke of God's hands, it meant something that exclusively referred to God's reality, but it also had a comparable reference point in the realm of human experience. . . . Expressions in the revelation such as hand, face, etc., which

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[117] See, e.g., ibid., 178.

[118] For an extended discussion of al-Ashʿarī's position on the divine attributes in his various works, see Allard, *Le problème*, 173–285.

[119] Nagel, *History*, 153. We deal with the question of *qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid*, which is central to Ibn Taymiyya's methodology and approach to the divine attributes, in detail in chapter 6.

[120] This inference from the seen to the unseen was one of the Muʿtazilī principles that al-Ashʿarī initially adopted but attempted to bend to his own purposes. He seems to have concluded that the Muʿtazila were not wrong in principle to draw such inferences with regard to the divine attributes (otherwise we would have no way of relating to the attributes at all); however, in their attempt to achieve maximum rational consistency, the Muʿtazila had pushed the principle so far that they committed precisely that kind of *tashbīh* from which they had originally fled. Thus, they essentially came to conceive of the divine attributes as being subject to the very same sorts of limitations that apply to human attributes denoted by the same name. It is for this reason that, in an effort to avoid likening God to created things, they ultimately denied the divine attributes altogether. Because they had essentially assimilated (*shabbahū*) God's attributes to man's, the Muʿtazila drew the inexorable conclusion that affirming *any* of the divine attributes necessarily involved likening God to creation (*tashbīh*).

[121] See Nagel, *History*, 154; also Thiele, "Between Cordoba and Nīsābūr," 227–228.

> God Himself chose, were by no means metaphors! But neither must they be understood in purely human-physical terms. Rather, they were real attributes whose true nature man was not able to recognize.[122]

Al-Ashʿarī's theological treatise *al-Ibāna ʿan uṣūl al-diyāna*[123] has been described as a turning point in Islamic theology, a kind of bridge work between the earlier credos (like that of al-Ṭaḥāwī) and the later dogmatic treatises, such as those of al-Ghazālī, al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286 or 691/1292), al-Ījī (d. 756/1355), or al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490).[124] In the *Ibāna*, which may be his first work after embracing Sunnism,[125] al-Ashʿarī shows no compromise with Muʿtazilī doctrines or methods whatsoever. In a later work, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (Theological doctrines of the Muslims), however, his tone is calmer and his positions are less black and white, as he is freer to "take the spoils from defeated Muʿtazilism and enrich therewith a henceforth orthodox *kalām*"[126] (which, for Ibn Taymiyya, it might be added, is precisely where al-Ashʿarī went wrong).[127]

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[122] Nagel, *History*, 154.

[123] For the Arabic text of this work with an English translation, see Klein, *Abu'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Ismāʿīl al-Ašʿarī's al-Ibānah ʿan uṣūl ad-diyānah*.

[124] Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 60.

[125] The chronology of the *Ibāna* is disputed. Gardet and Anawati (*Introduction*, 60) follow Wensinck (*Muslim Creed*, 93) in suggesting that the *Ibāna* was al-Ashʿarī's first post-conversion work. Allard (*Le problème*, 250–251), by contrast, dates it to around the year 315/927 or 928, placing it *after* al-Ashʿarī's other major works, including *Risāla ilā ahl al-thaghr*, *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ*, and *Istiḥsān al-khawḍ fī ʿilm al-kalām* [also known by the title *Kitāb al-Ḥathth ʿalā al-baḥth*—on which see Frank, "Al-Ashʿarī's *Kitāb al-ḥathth ʿalā l-Baḥth*"]. Note that Ibn Taymiyya also considered the *Ibāna* to be al-Ashʿarī's last work on theology, one that represented his final view on theological matters. On various views concerning the authenticity of and the relationship among al-Ashʿarī's various works, see Thiele, "Between Cordoba and Nīsābūr," 227, n. 2.

[126] Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 60. The difference in the tone of al-Ashʿarī's various treatises has also been interpreted as a function of each work's respective audience. Watt (*Formative Period*, 306–307), for instance, follows Allard's view that al-Ashʿarī's *al-Lumaʿ* was directed to the Muʿtazila and other *mutakallimūn*, whereas the *Ibāna* contains arguments specifically addressed to the Ḥanbalīs—a point that perhaps explains its more strident, less compromising tone. See Allard, *Le problème*, esp. 215–285. Yet we must bear in mind that al-Ashʿarī also seems to have written the work *Istiḥsān al-khawḍ fī ʿilm al-kalām* (The vindication of the use of the science of *kalām*) with a Ḥanbalī audience in mind, in this case to convince them of the legitimacy and appropriateness, or "permissibility" ("*istiḥsān*" here presumably being used in its legal sense), of engaging in *kalām*. These positions are perhaps not incompatible since a strict Ḥanbalī (recall Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal) would have objected to any rationalistic (understood here in the pejorative sense of pseudo-rational) defense of theological doctrines, regardless how conservative and traditionalist the positions defended. For the Arabic text of al-Ashʿarī's *Istiḥsān* with an English translation, see McCarthy, *The Theology of al-Ashʿarī*.

[127] For a summary of the achievement of al-Ashʿarī, see Watt, *Formative Period*, 303ff. For

When Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī died in 324/935 (or 936), he left behind only three pupils, none of whom are particularly well known to posterity.[128] It is not until the second generation after al-Ashʿarī that we encounter three other, prominent figures who took up al-Ashʿarī's torch and who further developed the thought and formalized the method of their esteemed master. The most important of these figures is Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī.[129]

7.2 *al-Bāqillānī*

Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), like al-Ashʿarī, hailed from the city of Basra, where he is reported to have studied *kalām* under two of al-Ashʿarī's direct students.[130] A Mālikī in legal rite,[131] al-Bāqillānī spent much of his life in Baghdad with the exception of a period during which he held the office of judge (*qāḍī*) somewhere outside the capital city.[132] Ibn Khaldūn credits al-Bāqillānī with perfecting the early methodology of Ashʿarī *kalām*,[133] and modern scholars have agreed on the pivotal role al-Bāqillānī played in consolidating the school.[134] Al-Bāqillānī drew out al-Ashʿarī's initial insights and positions more fully and refined his method in order to provide the most robust defense of al-Ashʿarī's original doctrine possible.[135] We recall that

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a more detailed study of the development of al-Ashʿarī's doctrine, see Frank, "Elements in the Development of the Teaching of al-Ašʿarī." For an extended study of the life and thought of al-Ashʿarī, see McCarthy, *Theology*, *passim* and Allard, *Le problème*, 25–72.

[128] These are Abū Sahl al-Ṣuʿlūkī (d. 369/980) of Nishapur, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bāhilī (d. ca. 370/980) of Basra, and Abū ʿAbd Allāh b. Mujāhid al-Ṭāʾī (d. 360s/970s or 370s/980s) of Basra. Watt, *Formative Period*, 312. For a discussion of the major Ashʿarī figures up until al-Ghazālī, see Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 75–84.

[129] The other two being Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015) and Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027). Thiele, "Between Cordoba and Nīsābūr," 229.

[130] Namely, al-Bāhilī and Ibn Mujāhid. Watt, *Formative Period*, 312.

[131] Al-Bāqillānī's Mālikī affiliation seems to have contributed to the spread and acceptance of Ashʿarī theology in North Africa, a region uniformly Mālikī in legal rite. Before this time, most adherents of Ashʿarī *kalām* were Shāfiʿī (like al-Ashʿarī himself), though there were some Ḥanafīs among them as well. Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 76.

[132] Ibid.

[133] See Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 465, lines 12–13 for the remark that al-Bāqillānī "took a leading role in [developing] their [the Ashʿarīs'] method," specifically by making explicit the rational premises on which the key positions of the school rested.

[134] Thiele, "Between Cordoba and Nīsābūr," 231. Majid Fakhry, for instance, speaks of the "pioneering role [al-Bāqillānī played] in elaborating the metaphysical groundwork of Ashʿarism." Fakhry, *History*, 213.

[135] Al-Bāqillānī's ingenuity in this regard can be seen in his remodeling of al-Jubbāʾī's theory of the *aḥwāl*, or "states," a theory that he adapted to the needs of Ashʿarī theology by using it to prove what the Muʿtazila had intended it to *disprove* (namely, the subsistence in God of qualities such as knowledge, power, and will as distinct, existing entities,

al-Ashʿarī's views were, on the whole, rather conservative and close to those of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (though on some issues they tended more towards a middle path between strict Ḥanbalī traditionalism and Muʿtazilī-inspired rationalism). Whereas al-Ashʿarī had set stringent conditions for proofs, al-Bāqillānī laid down even more exacting standards, namely, through his principle of reversibility, which requires that proofs be fully reversible, meaning that the invalidity of a proof necessarily entails the falsity of that which it was meant to prove.[136]

On the whole, al-Bāqillānī can be considered the greatest systematizer of early Ashʿarī theology (the way of the "*mutaqaddimūn*") and, in a sense, the last one since, starting with al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) in the next generation, fundamental changes began to occur that paved the way for a "new *kalām*" (that of the "*muta'akhkhirūn*")—changes that involved a number of conceptual reformulations and methodological renovations of earlier Ashʿarī doctrine. But to gain an adequate understanding of exactly what happened and why, we must divert our attention briefly to the rise and development of an entirely separate discourse that had a major impact on Ashʿarī *kalām* as of the middle of the fifth/eleventh century: namely, philosophy (*falsafa*).

8 Philosophy

Philosophical reflection began early in the intellectual career of Islam.[137] As we have seen above, some Greek materials were already in circulation and being used in the Syriac tradition before the rise of Islam in the first/seventh century. Greek logic, along with other categories of Greek philosophy, had been incorporated into Christian theological discourse for several centuries, and elements of it had already begun to appear in early Muslim theological debates.[138] But it was the massive movement to translate Greek philosophical and scientific texts, an effort that lasted from the second/eighth to the fourth/tenth century and known simply as the translation movement, that was the major catalyst for the rise of a rationalist Muʿtazilī theology. This move-

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or *maʿānī*). See Thiele, "Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī's (d. 321/933) Theory of 'States' (*aḥwāl*)," 377–380.

[136] Nagel, *History*, 160.

[137] For a useful list of selected readings on all aspects of the Islamic philosophical tradition, see Adamson and Taylor, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, 426–441 ("Select Bibliography and Further Reading").

[138] See section 3 of the current chapter, p. 31ff.

ment also catalyzed the development of an independent tradition of philosophical reflection in Arabic, one whose formative and classical stages stretch from early third-/ninth-century Baghdad to late sixth-/twelfth-century Andalusia.[139]

The genealogy of the Arabic-Islamic philosophical tradition (also known by its Arabic name *falsafa*) that arose in the Muslim world as a result of the Greco-Arabic translation movement includes Aristotle and the main Hellenistic commentators on his work—all of whom, with the exception of the Aristotelian Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. ca. 200 CE), were Neoplatonists—in addition to original Neoplatonic texts.[140] Since even Aristotle's works were transmitted into Arabic through a distinctly Neoplatonic lens, Neoplatonism was central in setting the tenor of the Muslim philosophical tradition, and many of the ideas that Ibn Taymiyya found most objectionable in the philosophical and theological traditions he inherited were of Neoplatonic inspiration. The most outstanding (earlier) figures of the Arabic-Islamic philosophical tradition are al-Kindī (d. ca. 252/866), al-Fārābī (d. ca. 339/950), and, especially, their preeminent successor Ibn Sīnā, an independent and original thinker widely hailed as the greatest figure in the Muslim Peripatetic tradition. Ibn Sīnā, in fact, took up many of the questions that had been put forth in *kalām*, such that philosophy after the classical period had to contend with both Ibn Sīnā and the tradition of *kalām*.[141] As a result, philosophers post-Ibn Sīnā became more consistently concerned with providing solutions anchored in philosophy to the problems set forth by *kalām*.[142] At the same time, and far more significantly for our inquiry, *kalām* itself was enormously influenced by the thought of Ibn Sīnā, whose categories, ideas, and terminology left a lasting imprint on the works of the later *mutakallimūn*.[143] To gain a just appreciation of al-Ghazālī's synthesis at the turn of the sixth/twelfth century—and, ultimately, of the nature of the intellectual tradition that Ibn Taymiyya inherited and to which he responded with such vigor two centuries later—we must first understand the challenge philosophy posed to *kalām* and to Islamic religious belief more generally, as well as the imprint the philosophical tradition left on *kalām* and its practitioners.

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[139] For a detailed presentation of the various stages of the translation movement and the actors involved, see Fakhry, *History*, 4–19 and, more extensively, Gutas, *Greek Thought*, *passim*.

[140] For a table of the numerous Neoplatonic writings translated into Arabic (or Syriac) presented in convenient table form, see d'Ancona, "Greek into Arabic," 22–23.

[141] See comments at Wisnovsky, "Avicenna," 92.

[142] *Falsafa* has traditionally been seen as primarily, and perhaps exclusively, influenced by Islamic theological discourse not in its method or basic philosophical precommitments but only in the sense that it ultimately took up some of the issues discussed in *kalām* and "philosophized" them, so to speak, by assimilating them to the larger philosophical *Weltanschauung* and recasting them in light of a purely philosophical interpretation. (See, e.g., Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 322–323, n. 3.) More recent scholarship, however, has contended that the boundaries between theology and philosophy were not as clearly demarcated, whether in terms of methodology or in terms of subject matter. See, for instance, Wisnovsky, "Notes," as well as Wisnovsky, "Nature and Scope."

8.1 *al-Kindī*

The Kufan-educated Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq al-Kindī (d. ca. 252/866), known as the "philosopher of the Arabs" (*faylasūf al-ʿArab*), flourished in Baghdad under the patronage of the same three Abbasid caliphs who had executed the *miḥna*. Al-Kindī endeavored to make philosophy acceptable to his fellow Muslims through a "policy of reconciliation,"[144] in part by designating philosophy by the Qurʾānic term *ḥikma* (wisdom) and in part by attempting to demonstrate that the rational sciences were consistent with true belief, specifically *tawḥīd*.[145] Classical biographers, both supporters and detractors, agree that al-Kindī sought to bridge the gap between philosophy and religion,[146] holding that the two could not be truly contradictory since they both served the common end of making accessible to men the knowledge of the True One (al-Ḥaqq), God.[147] Indeed, while al-Kindī privileged prophetic over philosophical knowledge with respect to the immediacy of the former (in contrast to the latter, which can be acquired only after years of arduous learning), he did not seem to believe that prophets had access to a categorically different *kind* of knowledge than what was available to the best philosophers.[148]

As a philosopher, al-Kindī advocated the application of rational philosophical methods to the texts of revelation. Not surprisingly, his overall positions on theological issues were close to those of the Muʿtazila—although there appears to be no evidence in his writings that he considered himself either a theologian or a Muʿtazilī proper[149]—and, as a methodological principle, he placed the tools and techniques of philosophy above those of *kalām*.[150] Thus, while the titles of a number of al-Kindī's works reveal his clear affinities with Muʿtazilī preoccupations, the titles of other treatises show that he also undertook detailed refutations of certain Muʿtazilī theses, such as atomism.[151] Significantly, however, al-Kindī—almost uniquely among the philosophers—parted ways with Aristotle on a number of fundamental issues in favor of positions that were in line with Islamic theological postulates. He joined with Muʿtazilī theologians in defending Islamic beliefs against various groups (materialists, Manichaeans, atheists, and rival philosophers), breaking ranks with both Aristotle and the Neoplatonists on touchstone issues like the creation of the world ex nihilo,[152] the resurrection of the body, the possibility of miracles and prophetic revelation, and the ultimate destruction of the world—all of which he upheld, in conformity with Islamic teachings but in opposition to the Greek philosophical tradition and to later *falsafa*.[153] Finally, it has been suggested that al-Kindī's conception of God as the efficient cause of the universe can, in a sense, be seen as an adaptation of the Neoplatonic conception of the One to the theistic concept of God as Creator.[154]

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[143] See, for example, Wisnovsky, "One Aspect."

[144] Endress, "Defense of Reason," 15.

[145] Ibid., 4–5. See also Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, 43 on his "belief in the harmony, even the identity, of the truths of philosophy and the truths of Islam."

[146] Fakhry, *History*, 68.

[147] Klein-Franke, "Al-Kindī," 171.

[148] Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, 43.

[149] Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation*, 5.

[150] Endress, "Defense of Reason," 6, 8. See also Watt, *Formative Period*, 206–208.

We can likewise discern the impact of *kalām* on some of the topics taken up by philosophy even as early as al-Kindī, insofar as he attempted to provide solutions from within philosophy to some of the issues being debated in *kalām*. In his most important treatise, *Fī al-falsafa al-ūlā* (On first philosophy, of which only the first of four parts has been preserved),[155] al-Kindī discusses the notion of oneness, the crux of which is that nothing about which something can be predicated can be said to be "one." Since God is the ultimate One and since the ascription of any predicate or concept to an entity automatically entails its multiplicity, it follows that nothing whatsoever can be predicated of God. The radical negative theology that results from this conception of oneness is a standard feature of later *falsafa* and, as we have seen, a central tenet (albeit in a mitigated form) of the Muʿtazila, self-styled "people of (divine) justice and unicity" (*ahl al-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd*). Even in the case of al-Kindī the philosopher, however, some argue against interpreting his theology as purely negative, contending that the *faylasūf al-ʿArab* was primarily concerned with "preserving a doctrine of positive divine attribution that can withstand the requirements of simplicity and transcendence."[156] In particular, at the end of *Fī al-falsafa al-ūlā*, al-Kindī refers to the True One, God, as " 'the Giver and Originator, the Powerful, the Supporter,' " from which Peter Adamson concludes that, for al-Kindī, "God is not just a principle of oneness; He is an agent."[157] Be that as it may, the philosophers' starkly abstract conception of divine oneness, with the attendant radical denial of most or all of the divine attributes, is one of the targets Ibn Taymiyya attacks most consistently and relentlessly in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*.

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[151] Adamson, "Al-Kindī and the Reception," 48. For a detailed discussion of the philosophical convergences and divergences between al-Kindī and the Muʿtazila, see Adamson, "Al-Kindī and the Muʿtazila," 45–77. For the theory of atomism as first introduced by the Muʿtazilī theologian Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf, see Frank, *Metaphysics of Created Being*.

[152] Though he seems to have embraced a composite doctrine that combined the Neoplatonic emanationist notion of the One, Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, and the theistic conception of God as Creator, thus simultaneously combining Neoplatonic, Aristotelian, and Islamic doctrines on God. See Adamson, "Al-Kindī and the Reception," 38–39; also Endreß, "Athen, Alexandria, Bagdad, Samarkand," 49.

[153] Fakhry, *History*, 69. Fakhry stresses how orthodox al-Kindī was for a philosopher (see, for instance, Fakhry, 93–94). Muhsin Mahdi, by contrast, remarks that while al-Kindī's views in some respects resemble those of Muʿtazilī theologians, nevertheless "as one looks more closely at what al-Kindī writes, he sees that the spirit, intention, and substance of his thought are quite different from those of the Muʿtazila." See Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation*, 5.

[154] Endress, "Defense of Reason," 10–11. See also Ivry, "Al-Kindī as Philosopher," 118–124 and *passim* for al-Kindī's eclectic blending of Neoplatonic and Islamic monotheistic elements within a larger framework of primarily Aristotelian inspiration.

[155] Klein-Franke, "Al-Kindī," 168.

8.2 *al-Fārābī*

Born in Farab (located in current-day Turkmenistan), Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī (d. ca. 339/950) spent most of his life in Baghdad, where he studied logic under the Nestorian Christian scholars Yūḥannā b. Ḥaylān (fl. early fourth/tenth century)[158] and Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnus (d. 328/940) and where he taught the Syriac Jacobite Christian translator and logician Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī (d. 363/974).[159] Al-Fārābī was universally venerated as an unparalleled master of logic and was also considered the leading expositor of Plato and Aristotle in his day.[160] It is primarily his work on logic, however, that earned him the epithet "the Second Teacher" (*al-muʿallim al-thānī*)[161]—second only to the First

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[156] Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, 55.

[157] Ibid., 57.

[158] We do not have precise information about the date of Yūḥannā b. Ḥaylān's death; we know only that he died during the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir bi-Llāh, sometime between the years 295/908 and 320/932. See Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ*, 605; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 7:237.

[159] Black, "Al-Fārābī," 178.

[160] Fakhry, *History*, 107. For a list of al-Fārābī's chief logical writings, see Fakhry, 109. For a study of the pre-Fārābian logical tradition in Arabic, with a concentration on early terminology as an indication of the primarily Syriac roots thereof, see Zimmermann, "Some Observations on al-Farabi and Logical Tradition."

[161] For one interpretation of how al-Fārābī came to merit this appellation, see S.H. Nasr, "Why Was Al-Fārābī Called the Second Teacher?"

Teacher, Aristotle. Ibn Rushd and Maimonides (d. 601/1204) pay tribute to him for his work on logic,[162] and Ibn Sīnā records his debt to al-Fārābī for his understanding of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.[163]

Al-Fārābī is credited not only with writing the "first systematic exposition of Neo-Platonism in Arabic"[164] but also, indeed, with laying the foundations of the mainstream tradition of Islamic philosophy.[165] Like al-Kindī, only a small portion of his many works has survived.[166] The majority of al-Fārābī's writings are dedicated to logic and the philosophy of language, specifically the relationship between abstract logic and the philosophical terminology used to express logical relations, on the one hand, and ordinary language and grammar, on the other.[167] The issue of logic and language represents a cardinal point of contention in the debate between reason and revelation[168] and, in fact, constitutes a major element of Ibn Taymiyya's attack on abstract philosophical reasoning and of his attempt to reconstitute rationality on more intuitive principles of everyday reasoning.[169]

Also relevant to the topic of reason and revelation is the fact that al-Fārābī, like al-Kindī before him, dealt explicitly with the relationship between philosophy and religion,[170] casting this vital discussion in terms that were later closely echoed by Ibn Sīnā and, especially, Ibn Rushd. Al-Fārābī saw the language of revelation as a popular expression of philosophical truth, employing the tools of rhetoric (*khiṭāb*) and poetics (*shiʿr*) to indicate, in figurative terms, truths that the unphilosophical masses are incapable of grasping rationally.[171] Though based on Platonic and Hellenistic antecedents, this notion of revelation as a (mere) representation of reality encoded in literary form was fully worked out, it seems, only in the context of the Arabic-Islamic philosophical tradition.[172] In his writings, al-Fārābī articulates a hierarchy of syllogistic arts in which, following Aristotle, demonstration (*burhān*) is the only apodictic method available in philosophy;[173] other modes of discourse, particularly rhetoric and poetics, serve the purposes of non-philosophical communication. As for dialectic (*jadal*), although it falls short of apodictic demonstration, al-Fārābī nevertheless assigns it a number of important ancillary functions that, taken together, "elevate [it] from the status of a mere handmaiden to a *de facto* partner with demonstration in philosophical pursuits."[174] Like al-Kindī before him, al-Fārābī explicitly called for the allegorical reinterpretation of scripture in instances in which the literal meaning conflicts with reason.[175] In this vein, he outlined a theory in which Aristotle's poetics is identified as the means of communication employed by revelation, the truths of which are thus communicated to the masses through *takhyīl*, a kind of "imaginalization" or imaginative evocation meant to stand in as a surrogate for those incapable of philosophical reasoning.[176] This notion of revelation's reliance on poetic language and on the imaginative evocation such language is said to enable went on to become standard doctrines of the philosophers; both ideas were forcefully reasserted two and a half centuries later by Ibn Rushd and come under massive and sustained attack by Ibn Taymiyya in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*. Al-Fārābī's central relevance to the debate on reason and revelation in Islam thus lies principally in his "interest in types of rationality, in modes of discourse and argumentation, and in the relations between ordinary and philosophical language," all of which form an "integral part of his answer to [the] historical challenge [of the] need to address seriously the sometimes competing claims between philosophy and religion."[177]

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[162] Black, "Al-Fārābī," 192.

[163] Ibid., 188.

[164] Fakhry, *History*, 107.

[165] Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation*, 3. This work provides an informative and interesting treatment of the background to and the various aspects of al-Fārābī's philosophical work.

[166] Black, "Al-Fārābī," 179.

[167] Ibid. For a full treatment, see Abed, *Aristotelian Logic and the Arabic Language in Alfārābī*. Al-Fārābī is also well known for his various writings on political science and philosophy. (See, for instance, the discussion in Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation*, 14–15 ff.)

[168] Epitomized by the famous debate between Mattā b. Yūnus, the logician, and Abū Saʿīd al-Ṣīrāfī (d. 368/979), the theologian, jurist, and philologist. For a presentation and English paraphrase of this debate, see Mahdi, "Language and Logic," 51–84. A full German translation of the debate by Gerhard Endreß is available as an appendix to his detailed study on the contentious relationship between Greek logic and Arabic grammar and philology from the beginning of Islam through al-Ghazālī. See Endreß, "Grammatik und Logik," 235–270. This appendix also includes a presentation and translation of a text by Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, Mattā b. Yūnus's most important Christian disciple (al-Fārābī, of course, was his most important Muslim disciple), on the difference between logic and grammar. (See Endreß, 271–296.) For an extensive study of al-Ṣīrāfī and a systematic interpretation of his debate with Mattā b. Yūnus, see, in the same volume, Kühn, "Die Rehabilitierung der Sprache."

[169] We return to the issue of language and terminology, a crucial component of Ibn Taymiyya's critique, in greater detail in chapter 4, then take up the question of the status of reason and rationality proper in chapter 5.

[170] See Mahdi, "Alfarabi on Philosophy and Religion."

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[171] Black, "Al-Fārābī," 181.

[172] Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz*, 246.

[173] Black, "Al-Fārābī," 181. For a discussion of al-Fārābī's theory of demonstration, including those aspects in which he differs from Aristotle—particularly al-Fārābī's "emphasis on the ascent toward primary truths at the expense of the subsequent deductive reasoning from them and his concomitant elevation of dialectic at the expense of demonstration in its usual meaning"—see Galston, "Al-Fārābī on Aristotle's Theory of Demonstration" (cited quotation at p. 30). Relevant to our concerns farther on, Galston raises the possibility that al-Fārābī may have viewed Aristotle's apodictic demonstration as merely "a guide for reasoning while itself an unattainable goal" (Galston, 32). Furthermore, al-Fārābī seems to have deemed it very difficult to construct full-fledged demonstrations from scratch and, consequently, to have given considerable weight to the practical necessity of beginning one's pursuit of truth by reasoning from dialectical syllogisms based on generally accepted premises, then refining these by a subsequent application of the rules of demonstration in order to distinguish true premises from false. Al-Fārābī therefore seems to stand in agreement with Ibn Taymiyya that true apodictic demonstration (as per the doctrine of the philosophers) is hard to come by, particularly when it comes to "acquiring premises of the requisite kind" (Galston, 31). Galston states the matter aptly when she asks if, for al-Fārābī, "the upward movement [i.e., from particular sense experiences] toward primary principles can ever provide the necessary certainty that demonstrations require of their starting-points" (Galston, 31).

[174] Black, "Al-Fārābī," 182. At the beginning of his *Kitāb al-Jadal* (Book of dialectic), al-Fārābī enumerates five ways in which dialectic contributes substantively to the philosophical pursuit, namely, (as paraphrased in Black, 182) "(1) by offering training in the skills of argumentation; (2) by providing an initial exposure to the principles of the individual demonstrative sciences; (3) by awakening awareness of the innate self-evident principles of demonstration, in particular for the physical sciences; (4) by developing the skills useful for communicating with the masses; and (5) for refuting sophistry."

8.3 *Ibn Sīnā*

Born near Bukhara (in current-day Uzbekistan), Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn b. Sīnā (d. 428/1037), known in the medieval and modern West under the Latinized name Avicenna, is without a doubt *the* central figure in the Arabic-Islamic philosophical tradition. Before Ibn Sīnā, philosophy and *kalām*, despite cross-fertilizations, represented two distinct strands of thought. With Ibn Sīnā, the two strands became intertwined to such an extent that post-Avicennian *kalām* came to represent a synthesis of Ibn Sīnā's metaphysics and Islamic theological doctrine.[178] Ibn Sīnā's metaphysical theses were taken up and debated by *kalām*-theologians right up to the dawn of the modern era.[179] In short, Ibn Sīnā "straddled two worlds: the world of *falsafa* and the world of *kalām*."[180]

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[175] Fakhry, *History*, 116.

[176] Black, "Al-Fārābī," 182.

[177] Ibid., 192.

[178] See Wisnovsky, "Avicenna," 92. See also Ayman Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī," 175 for the observation that philosophy (*falsafa*) and theology (*kalām*) "came to be as if one and the same discipline." See also Endress, "Defense of Reason," 30 for the point that "it was through him [Ibn Sīnā] that the *falsafa* came to be and to stay an integral and living part of Islamic thought" (and further remarks at Endress, 37).

[179] Wisnovsky, "Avicenna," 93. For an overview of Ibn Sīnā's metaphysics, see Marmura, "Avicenna's Metaphysics"; also Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xiv–xxiv, and *passim*. For a more in-depth treatment, see Menn, "Avicenna's Metaphysics" and McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 149–208. For an exhaustive exploration, see Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*.

[180] Wisnovsky, "Avicenna," 109.

Ibn Sīnā's influence, like that of al-Fārābī, was felt most profoundly in the fields of logic and, especially, metaphysics. Our concern here is strictly limited to those aspects of Ibn Sīnā's thought that were eventually adopted by mainstream *mutakallimūn* and naturalized into later *kalām*. One of the most important of these ideas is Ibn Sīnā's distinction between essence and existence, as well as his distinction (which attracted a considerable amount of criticism) between that which is necessary by virtue of itself (*al-wājib bi-dhātihi*), namely, God, and that which is necessary but by virtue of another (*al-wājib bi-ghayrihi*), namely, everything other than God (which is deemed to exist necessarily, albeit by virtue of God and not by virtue of itself). These twin theses exercised an enormous influence in post-classical Islamic intellectual history, both in various strains of later philosophy and in mainstream Sunnī, as well as Shīʿī, *kalām*.[181]

Ibn Sīnā viewed logic as the key to philosophy, an indispensable tool that leads to knowledge of the essential natures of things[182]—a conception of logic that Ibn Taymiyya attacks emphatically.[183] Ibn Sīnā is credited with articulating the original notion of God as being "necessarily existent by virtue of Himself" (*wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihi*)—the Necessarily Existent from whom the rest of existent things then overflow by necessity (which is why they are classified as *necessarily* existent, though by virtue not of themselves but of God) in typical Neoplatonic emanationist fashion. Ibn Sīnā's particular notion of God precluded that He could have any intentional relation to the world[184]—a major point of variance with Islamic theological doctrine, which insists on God's fully free and volitional creation of the cosmos. Furthermore, according to Ibn Sīnā, divine providence cannot be understood in terms of God's direct superintendence of or concern for the world, but only in the far more remote sense of God's (mere) knowledge of the order of all existence and the manner of its goodness.[185]

Later critics of Ibn Sīnā, such as the Ashʿarī theologians al-Ghazālī and al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), mostly took issue with Ibn Sīnā's conception of God and His relationship to the world, his denial of God's knowledge of particulars as particulars, the doctrine of the eternity of the universe, and his purely spiritualist, non-corporeal conception of the afterlife. Al-Ghazālī, as we shall see, dedicated one of his most famous and influential works, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*), to launching a devastating attack on major elements of the Muslim philosophical tradition, primarily as incarnated in Ibn Sīnā's unique synthesis of Aristotelian, Neoplatonic, and original Avicennian elements. In his attack on philosophy, al-Ghazālī singled out the last three doctrines enumerated above (the eternity of the world, the denial of God's knowledge of particulars, and the denial of a physical resurrection) as fundamentally irreconcilable with the tenets of Islam, such that anyone who held these views was beyond the pale of the faith. Ibn Taymiyya, too, had many criticisms of Ibn Sīnā, for he "very perspicaciously saw what Avicenna had done: he had incorporated into, and discussed in terms of his own philosophical system, all the intellectual concerns of Islamic society, such as the nature of prophecy, eschatology (*maʿād*), etc."[186] It was precisely Ibn Sīnā's discussion and reinterpretation of central Islamic doctrines on the terms of an independent (and, in his eyes, rationally inadequate) philosophical system that Ibn Taymiyya objected to so strongly and that he sought to remedy.

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[181] Ibid., 93.

[182] Inati, "Ibn Sīnā," 234–235. See also McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 28–35.

[183] On Ibn Taymiyya's critique of logic, see Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, as well as von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik" and von Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy." For a recent reassessment of Hallaq's interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya and a critical review of Ibn Taymiyya's critique of logic and the logicians, see El-Rouayheb, "Theology and Logic," 416–422.

[184] Inati, "Ibn Sīnā," 242.

[185] Ibid.

Ultimately, however, the criticisms of al-Ghazālī and others failed to prevent Ibn Sīnā's thought not only from profoundly affecting the post-Avicennian philosophical tradition (which is to be expected) but also from penetrating the very conceptual core of *kalām*, leading to a distinction between the early *kalām* tradition (that of the so-called *mutaqaddimūn*) and a later, distinctly "post-Avicennian" *kalām* (that of the so-called *mutaʾakhkhirūn*) that unmistakably bears the imprint of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy.[187] Even al-Ghazālī himself, who was initially perceived by Western scholars to be categorically opposed to philosophy on all levels, is now understood to have been rather deeply influenced by his arch-rival Persian compatriot.[188]

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[186] Gutas, "Heritage of Avicenna," 85.

[187] Wisnovsky, "Avicenna," 92. See further at p. 133, where Wisnovsky goes so far as to characterize the post-Avicennian *mutakallimūn* as "the torchbearers of the Avicennian tradition in Islamic intellectual history."

[188] And, in fact, this post-Avicennian "*kalām* of the *mutaʾakhkhirūn*" may just as well be described as a "post-Ghazālian *kalām*" since it was primarily al-Ghazālī who, in refuting Ibn Sīnā, simultaneously opened the door to his philosophy and (unwittingly?) adopted and domesticated within both *kalām* and Sufism a number of important tenets of his rival's teaching. For a study of the affinities between al-Ghazālī's thought and that of Ibn Sīnā, see Janssens, "Al-Ghazzālī's *Tahāfut*." See also Tim Winter's remarks in his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, 12–14.

9 The New *Kalām* and Subsequent Developments

Theology in the fifth/eleventh century underwent a fundamental change as it came under the direct influence of the imposing philosophical system of Ibn Sīnā. We recall that philosophy until the middle of the fourth/tenth century was, both methodologically and institutionally, separate from *kalām* to a considerable degree and that the philosophers as a group, from al-Kindī through al-Fārābī, had a relatively minor impact on theological discourse.[189] Indeed, although the theologians had absorbed a number of methodological tools from the philosophers,[190] the problems treated in *kalām* remained essentially the same throughout this nearly three-century period. This remained true until a seismic shift took place with the rise, post-Ibn Sīnā, of the new *kalām* reflected in the work of al-Juwaynī and, especially, of his famous student, al-Ghazālī. Given the relative isolation in which philosophy had incubated during its initial development and subsequent consolidation—that is, during the period of some two hundred years from al-Kindī through Ibn Sīnā—it must have seemed as if philosophy had come from nowhere to shake the very foundations of theology itself. This shock may well have led to a sense that Ashʿarī *kalām*, as originally developed by al-Ashʿarī in response to the Muʿtazila, was relatively ill-equipped to deal with philosophy proper and that even after the introduction of what were hoped to be the requisite methodological renovations, such as those of al-Bāqillānī, rational *certainty* in matters of theology continued to prove elusive, particularly in the face of philosophy's supreme confidence in its ability to engender certitude.

9.1 *al-Juwaynī*

The first major Ashʿarī theologian to have come under the direct influence of philosophy via Ibn Sīnā seems to be Abū al-Maʿālī ("Imām al-Ḥaramayn") al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). Al-Juwaynī sought to rectify the inadequacies that had become apparent when *kalām* was confronted with philosophy. He did this by adopting certain aspects of the philosophical tradition that he deemed not only compatible with *kalām* but also, indeed, vital for shoring up the worldview of *kalām* in the face of Ibn Sīnā's imposing philosophy. Al-Juwaynī's changing attitude towards the place of the rational sciences in the overall hierarchy of Islamic religious disciplines is apparent from his view that *naẓar* (that is, engaging in a deliberate process of rational inquiry regarding the foundations of faith) is an obligation for all Muslims who have reached the age of maturity and must be undertaken in order for their faith to be considered valid.[191]

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[189] Watt, *Formative Period*, 204–208.

[190] On the nature of this process, see especially Wisnovsky, "Nature and Scope," as well as Wisnovsky, "Essence and Existence."

Though al-Bāqillānī had harbored reservations about the analogical inference from the seen to the unseen (*al-qiyās bi-l-shāhid ʿalā al-ghāʾib*) and had tried to reinforce the defensive arsenal of *kalām* by adding to it his principle of reversibility, with al-Juwaynī this inference from the seen was abandoned altogether.[192] But al-Juwaynī went farther and dropped al-Bāqillānī's reversibility principle as well, replacing it with certain elements selectively incorporated from the new logic, which was becoming more widespread via the work of Ibn Sīnā. Al-Juwaynī incorporated into the logical armor of *kalām* a number of techniques such as enumeration and division (*al-sabr wa-l-taqsīm*) and the disjunction between affirmation and negation. Such methods supplemented the two main procedures previously in use, the indirect syllogism (*qiyās al-khalf*) and the direct, or standard, syllogism (*al-qiyās al-mustaqīm*).[193]

In his final theological work, *al-ʿAqīda al-Niẓāmiyya*,[194] al-Juwaynī abandons the earlier *kalām*'s method of proving the existence of God from the createdness of the world (specifically the argument from the temporal origination of bodies, or *ḥudūth al-ajsām*) in favor of Ibn Sīnā's proof, which was based on the dichotomy of ontological necessity (*wujūb*) and contingency (*imkān*).[195] This change in the argument used for proving the existence of God and the increasing appropriation of logic as a tool for theology represent two fundamental distinctions on the basis of which practically all later thinkers[196] differentiate between the "early *kalām*" of the *mutaqaddimūn* and the "later *kalām*" of the *mutaʾakhkhirūn*. Furthermore, al-Juwaynī seems to have been the first to incorporate the Muʿtazilī doctrine of atomism into Ashʿarī *kalām* as a normative teaching that, in combination with the argument from contingency, was used to prove the existence of God, His attributes, and the temporality, or "temporal origination" (*ḥudūth*), of the world.[197]

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[191] See Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 66 (citing the opening of al-Juwaynī's *Kitāb al-Irshād*). As we shall discover, Ibn Taymiyya would not reject this in principle since the Qurʾān is full of exhortations to "look" (*faʾnẓurū*, etc.) and to ponder. Rational reflection (in the sense of looking and pondering) is therefore fundamental, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, to reaching and maintaining authentic conviction in the truth of Islam. His main goal in the *Darʾ*, however, is to refute the validity of the *methods* and *content* of what passed for *naẓar* among later *kalām* theologians, such as al-Juwaynī, and to replace this with a reconfigured "sound reasoning" (*ḥusn al-naẓar*) that he identifies with that of the early community of the pre-*kalām*/pre-philosophy stage, in which "'reason and revelation' … were not experienced as dichotomous" (Winter, "Reason as Balance," 8).

[192] Nagel, *History*, 165.

[193] Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 73.

[194] On the chronology of al-Juwaynī's works, see Allard, *Le problème*, 379–380.

[195] Nagel, *History*, 173. See also Wisnovsky, "One Aspect." On al-Juwaynī's reforms of the earlier *kalām* argument for the existence of God, see Thiele, "Between Cordoba and Nīsābūr," 236. Antecedents to al-Juwaynī's reform can be found even before Ibn Sīnā in the work of the Muʿtazilī Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044); see Madelung, "Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's Proof." On the relationship between Ibn Sīnā's proof for the existence of God and *kalām* theology more generally, see Rudolph, "La preuve de l'existence de Dieu."

Another crucial departure from al-Ashʿarī's methodology in the work of al-Juwaynī—and one that is of central concern to Ibn Taymiyya—relates to al-Juwaynī's position on the divine attributes. Both al-Ashʿarī and al-Bāqillānī, as we have seen, upheld a modified version of the *bi-lā kayf* doctrine of the early Muslim community as a means of preserving both divine transcendence and the literal integrity of the Qurʾān's assertions regarding the attributes of God. Al-Juwaynī, however, went farther by separating attributes into essential (*nafsī*) and qualitative (*maʿnawī*), a move that has been described as a shift towards a more "liberal" Ashʿarī theology, one less attached to a literal understanding of Qurʾānic statements regarding the divine attributes.[198] In this, al-Juwaynī was one of the first Ashʿarī theologians to make *taʾwīl* of—in the sense of interpreting figuratively—the so-called revealed attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-khabariyya*), such as God's hands, face, and other such attributes that cannot be known through independent reason and are denoted in revelation by terms that could seem to imply corporeality.[199]

Similarly, al-Juwaynī was the first theologian to elaborate a juridical methodology on the basis of the principles of the new *kalām*, an initiative brought to full fruition by his student al-Ghazālī,[200] who oversaw the firm and complete incorporation of logic into theology as well. Al-Juwaynī nonetheless represents a critical juncture in the transition from the earlier style of reasoning in *kalām* to the new, philosophically oriented *kalām*, being as he was "old-school by virtue of his dialectical method, but an old-schooler who portends the triumph of the new method."[201] According to Ibn Khaldūn, the old way is exemplified by al-Bāqillānī's reversibility principle (which states that the invalidity of the proof entails the falsity of what is being proved), while the new way, informed by Aristotelian logic, is not bound by this principle. The principle itself seems to be drawn primarily from legal analogy (*qiyās*) as it was originally used in the domain of *fiqh*, in which the Aristotelian syllogism had not yet made its appearance.[202] In the new logic on the basis of which al-Bāqillānī's reversibility principle is rejected, however, the Aristotelian syllogism becomes predominant. This "new method"—which incorporates the new logic as well as the new argument for the existence of God, both compliments of Ibn Sīnā—comes fully into its own with al-Ghazālī, after whom the method and terminology of *kalām* come to resemble that of philosophy more and more with each succeeding generation of Ashʿarīs.[203]

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[196] Such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (Nagel, *History*, 207). See Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 465, line 22 to 466, line 4 for the incorporation of logic into *kalām* and its centrality in the demarcation of "old-style *kalām*" (*ṭarīqat al-mutaqaddimīn*) from "new-style *kalām*" (*ṭarīqat al-mutaʾakhkhirīn*).

[197] Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 73.

[198] Ibid., 66. In the generation before al-Juwaynī, Ibn Fūrak made *taʾwīl* of certain *ḥadīth*, while ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī had previously endorsed a more thorough-going *taʾwīl* than Ibn Fūrak. See Allard, *Le problème*, 326–329 on Ibn Fūrak and Allard, 334–342 on al-Baghdādī.

[199] Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 73.

[200] Primarily through al-Ghazālī's systematic incorporation of logic into his famous work on jurisprudence, *al-Mustaṣfā min ʿilm al-uṣūl*.

9.2 *al-Ghazālī*

The "Proof of Islam" (Ḥujjat al-Islām) Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) is a watershed figure in Islamic intellectual history whose thought represents a confluence of jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, and Sufism and who rightfully deserves a separate discussion in relation to each of these fields.[204] We treat him here not only because of his superb philosophical education and sharply analytical mind but also because it is his engagement with the Muslim philosophical tradition that is most relevant to the concerns of this study. This relevance stems not only from al-Ghazālī's refutation of certain central theses of the philosophers on purely *philosophical* grounds (similar to Ibn Taymiyya's refutations) but also from his adoption of certain elements of philosophy that he made part and parcel of Islamic orthodoxy (legal and theological, as well as spiritual and mystical). In the pivotal figure of al-Ghazālī, who developed an early interest in the epistemological foundations of knowledge,[205] we witness the full crossover in Islamic theology from the way of the early school (*ṭarīq al-mutaqaddimīn*) to the way of the later school (*ṭarīq al-mutaʾakhkhirīn*) foreshadowed by al-Juwaynī.[206]

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[201] Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 154. For an analysis of the main differences between old-style and new-style *kalām*, see the discussion at Gardet and Anawati, 72–76.

[202] Ibid., 72–73.

[203] Ibid., 154.

[204] On al-Ghazālī's life and works, see Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 19–59.

[205] Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz*, 264.

[206] Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 72. For a more detailed discussion of the progressive crossover from the "old way" to the "new way" through an analysis of al-Bāqillānī's *Tamhīd*, al-Juwaynī's *Irshād*, and al-Ghazālī's *Iqtiṣād*, see Gardet and Anawati, 153–160. In sum,

Born in 450/1058 in the northeastern Iranian city of Tus, al-Ghazālī studied in Nishapur under the eminent Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī. He then taught at the prestigious Niẓāmiyya madrasa in Baghdad for four years. During this period, al-Ghazālī's intense philosophical studies led him to produce a number of important works,[207] including an exposition of logic, *Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī fann al-manṭiq* (The standard of knowledge in the art of logic),[208] and an important work of Ashʿarī theology, *al-Iqtiṣād fī al-iʿtiqād* (The just mean in belief). He wrote his most celebrated work, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*), after a lengthy period of solitary travel dedicated to treading the Sufi path of spiritual purification and mystical realization. Upon returning home from this extended hiatus,[209] al-Ghazālī resumed his teaching and other scholarly activities, producing, inter alia, a major work on *uṣūl al-fiqh* (the aforementioned *al-Mustaṣfā*),[210] an intellectual and spiritual autobiography, two mystical treatises, and, shortly before his death, a small work warning *against* the pursuit of *kalām* theology by the common people.

In one of his most famous and influential works, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*),[211] al-Ghazālī sharply critiques the philosophical tradition—particularly Ibn Sīnā's metaphysics and psychology,[212] but also aspects of al-Fārābī's philosophy.[213] This attack elicited a strident, line-by-line response by the staunchly Aristotelian philosopher Ibn Rushd, born in the Andalusian city of Cordoba only fifteen years after al-Ghazālī's death in north-

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the authors remark that the new way, whose eventual triumph one can already sense in the work of al-Juwaynī, becomes fully actualized in the work of al-Ghazālī, with Ashʿarī theologians thereafter incorporating an ever greater portion of the terms and categories of philosophy into *kalām* proper (Gardet and Anawati, 154).

[207] For a chronological presentation and discussion of al-Ghazālī's main works, see Madelung, "Al-Ghazālī's Changing Attitude."

[208] Michael Marmura speaks of al-Ghazālī's work as being an exposition of "Avicenna's logic." Marmura, "Al-Ghazālī," 139. Fakhry specifies this notion of an Avicennian logic as one in which "Aristotelian, Neo-Platonic, and Stoic elements are intermingled." Fakhry, *History*, 133. For a discussion of Ibn Sīnā's presentation of logic in his famous *Shifāʾ*, see Fakhry, 133–135.

[209] For a reinterpretation of al-Ghazālī's "crisis" as traditionally depicted on the basis of his *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (*Deliverance from Error*), see Garden, "Revisiting al-Ghazālī's Crisis" and, more extensively, Garden, *First Islamic Reviver*, 1–60.

[210] See p. 65, n. 200 above.

[211] On which see Griffel, "Theology Engages with Avicennan Philosophy," 437–446.

[212] Marmura, "Al-Ghazālī," 137. For al-Ghazālī's debt, on the other hand, to philosophy—and particularly to Ibn Sīnā—in his theory of mystical cognition, see Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*. For a concise and pointed account of al-Ghazālī's complex relationship to philosophy, see Madelung, "Al-Ghazālī's Changing Attitude."

[213] Marmura, "Al-Ghazālī," 144.

eastern Iran. In the *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazālī charges the philosophers with relying on inherited assumptions that cannot be deduced apodictically[214] and sets out to refute twenty of their discrete doctrines, three of which he considered irreconcilable with Islamic belief.[215] These three doctrines are (1) the eternity of the world, (2) the idea that God knows only universal concepts and not particular instantiations thereof, and (3) the impossibility of a physical resurrection after death.[216]

Al-Ghazālī's was the first, though not the last, attempt in Islam to respond to philosophy on its own grounds, using purely philosophical arguments rather than merely vilifying philosophy as a foreign science, accusing its practitioners of impiety, or arguing against it based solely on the authority of scripture. Yet despite the mordancy of al-Ghazālī's attack against the philosophers and the longstanding view that his offensive sounded the death knell of (at least a particular brand of) philosophy in the Muslim world, more recent scholarship has revealed the extent to which al-Ghazālī's own thought was indebted to that of his ideological foes, in particular Ibn Sīnā.[217] Indeed, it is well known that while al-Ghazālī rejected many aspects of philosophy entirely, most notably its precarious metaphysics, he nonetheless enthusiastically embraced the Aristotelian logic built on definition and syllogism that forms the core of the entire system.[218] Perhaps sensing the vulnerability of *kalām* arguments supported by earlier forms of logic in the face of Ibn Sīnā's imposing philosophical edifice, al-Ghazālī made Ibn Sīnā's logic his own and henceforth incorporated it into *kalām* (just as he made it part and parcel of legal theory as well). In his enthusiasm for this powerful new tool of logic, al-Ghazālī even believed he could identify in the Qurʾān a prefiguring of the five forms of the Aristotelian syllogism.[219] We saw above how, starting with al-Juwaynī, the dialectical and syllogistic methods of argumentation were combined. Al-Ghazālī now fully accepts formal deductive reasoning based on the search for a universal middle term and makes it part and parcel of Islamic theological reasoning.[220] Al-Ghazālī thus made important innovations in terms of method, mode of exposition, and style of reasoning,[221] and it is this new method of reasoning and arguing that was identified as the "way of the later [school]" (*ṭarīq al-mutaʾakhkhirīn*) by Ibn Khaldūn and others.[222]

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[214] Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz*, 274–275.

[215] For a concise and lucid summary of all twenty issues dealt with in the *Tahāfut*, see Fakhry, *History*, 222–233.

[216] On al-Ghazālī's treatment of these three doctrines and his *fatwā* against them, see Griffel, "Theology Engages with Avicennan Philosophy," 442–446 and, more exhaustively, Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz*, 260–281. For a succinct discussion of al-Ghazālī's views on defining the proper boundaries of faith in his *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayna al-Islām wa-l-zandaqa* (Criterion for discernment between Islam and disbelief), see Jackson, *On the Boundaries*. For an extended analysis, see Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz*, 304–335, esp. sections 3 and 4.

[217] See, e.g., Janssens, "Al-Ghazzālī's *Tahāfut*." See also Landolt, "Ghazālī and '*Religionswissenschaft*'"; Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 97–109; Wisnovsky, "One Aspect," *passim*; Madelung, "Al-Ghazālī's Changing Attitude," esp. 29–31; Rudolph, "Al-Ghazālī's Concept of Philosophy," *passim*; and Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 81–101.

[218] See introduction to Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xii–xiv.

Regarding the metaphorical interpretation of texts, al-Ghazālī accepted the use of *taʾwīl*, in the manner of al-Juwaynī, to obviate overtly anthropomorphic readings of the *ṣifāt khabariyya*, or "revealed attributes" (hands, face, etc.),[223] but he insisted that such *taʾwīlāt* should remain the province of the elite and not be discussed among the general populace for fear of inducing confusion in their minds.[224] Yet al-Ghazālī seems willing—at least in some of his writings—to go a step farther than al-Juwaynī. We see an example of this tendency in his *Mishkāt al-anwār* (*Niche of Lights*),[225] which contains a complete theory of symbolism (in the sense of allegory, or *tamthīl*) with respect to the sensible and intelligible worlds, as well as multiple examples of symbolic exegesis of the Qurʾān.[226]

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[219] See Chelhot, "«al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm»," 12–15 for a discussion of al-Ghazālī's identification of the "five rules of thought" (namely, five different syllogistic figures) that he contends are revealed in the Qurʾān. See also Kleinknecht, "Al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm," where the author emphasizes, in particular, al-Ghazālī's attempt to wrest logic from the exclusive province of the philosophers and to win it over for more general use by the educated, as well as his use of tangible metaphors to make logical reasoning acceptable to those suspicious of abstractions. For a nuanced study of al-Ghazālī's role in the reassessment and appropriation of logic, see Rudolph, "Die Neubewertung der Logik durch al-Ġazālī." On knowledge and certainty in al-Ghazālī more generally, see Luis Xavier López-Farjeat, "Al-Ghazālī on Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and Certainty (*yaqīn*)."

[220] Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 360–361.

[221] Ibid., 71–72.

[222] See Ibn Khaldūn's discussion in *al-Muqaddima*, 466, esp. lines 3–7 ff.

[223] For a detailed discussion of al-Ghazālī's position on the use of *taʾwīl*, see Aydin, "Al-Ghazâlî on Metaphorical Interpretation."

[224] Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz*, 273–274, 317–319. See also Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 111–122 and, for a much more extensive treatment, Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist." The latter two studies provide a thorough analysis of al-Ghazālī's iteration of the *qānūn al-taʾwīl*, Ibn Taymiyya's response to which forms the subject of chapter 3 of the present study.

[225] On this text, see Landolt, "Ghazālī and *'Religionswissenschaft.'* "

[226] For al-Ghazālī's use of allegory and his development of a symbolic vocabulary in the *Mishkāt*, see ibid. On the *Mishkāt*, see also Girdner, "Ghazālī's Hermeneutics."

Al-Ghazālī's attitude towards *kalām*—and, by extension, the status of discursive knowledge more generally—is critical for an understanding of his potent legacy and the development of Islamic thought that Ibn Taymiyya inherited one and a half centuries later. In the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, al-Ghazālī exhibits a guarded attitude towards *kalām*, admitting that it was not practiced by the earliest generations of Muslims but nevertheless conceding a limited use of it as indispensable for combatting heretical innovations (*bidaʿ*) that risked leading believers away from the path of the Qurʾān and Sunna. Given that such innovations were often put forth in the name of reason, they could only be effectively countered on their own—that is, on rational—terms. Notwithstanding this remedial function of *kalām*, al-Ghazālī does not seem to accept it as a fully legitimate (or at least not a fully adequate, much less necessary) path for reaching truth.[227] The inherent limitations of *kalām*, as al-Ghazālī instructs us in his work *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (*Deliverance from Error*), lie in the fact that it proceeds on the basis of premises that are not rationally certain in and of themselves since they must be accepted on the basis of revelation or the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the community; for this reason, they are incapable of yielding apodictic certitude (on a purely rational level) as the would-be result of a syllogistic process of inference.[228] Yet just as we saw in the case of al-Ashʿarī after his abandonment of the Muʿtazila, al-Ghazālī's initially critical, if not deprecatory, assessment of *kalām* yielded, in his later writings, to a more moderate and nuanced tone that accords *kalām* a legitimate, if duly circumscribed, place in the overall hierarchy of sciences. Thus, in his *al-Risāla al-Laduniyya*, for instance, al-Ghazālī classifies *ʿilm al-tawḥīd*—the science of the oneness of God, "also known as *kalām*"[229]—as occupying a position of prime importance. And while the sources of the knowledge of *tawḥīd*, according to the *Risāla*, are primarily the Qurʾān and the Sunna, he also specifically acknowledges that these sources contain "rational proofs and syllogistic demonstrations" (*al-dalāʾil al-ʿaqliyya wa-l-barāhīn al-qiyāsiyya*).[230]

Al-Ghazālī's guarded acceptance of *kalām* in some of his writings should not, however, obscure his abiding insistence on the limited nature of all purely discursive thought and related rational discourse, *kalām* being no exception.

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[227] Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 70–71. Breaking with his teacher, al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī explicitly distanced himself from the Ashʿarī view that makes some measure of rational inquiry (*naẓar*) into theological questions a requirement for salvation. Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz*, 273.

[228] Fakhry, *History*, 220.

[229] Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 119.

[230] Ibid.

For al-Ghazālī, true certainty (*yaqīn*) can ultimately be gained only through the "witnessing of realities" (*mushāhada*, or *mushāhadat al-ḥaqāʾiq*)[231] by way of spiritual unveiling (*kashf*). While *kalām* may be of initial assistance in helping one move towards this goal, it can also act as a veil insofar as one may unwittingly mistake the means for the end.

10 *Kalām* and *Falsafa* in the Wake of al-Ghazālī

10.1 *Ashʿarī Theology and the Struggle to Orthodoxy*

The immediate reception of the new Ashʿarī *kalām* in the sixth/twelfth century is illustrative of the larger intellectual mood of the period. While the Ashʿarī method undoubtedly had its enthusiastic supporters, it had many implacable opponents as well. As we may expect, the most vociferous opposition came from Ḥanbalī quarters—an example being ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (d. 481/1089), a Ḥanbalī and well-known Sufi who attacked the Ashʿarīs vigorously[232]—but opposition during this period went considerably beyond strictly Ḥanbalī circles. Yet in spite of ongoing polemics against rationalist *kalām* by Ḥanbalīs and others, the Ashʿarī school boasted a number of enthusiastic and vocal supporters as well, such as the Shāfiʿī *ḥadīth* master and historian Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176), who forcefully defended the legitimacy of a rational theological dialectic,[233] and even the Ḥanbalī jurist and theologian Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119).[234] In time, Ashʿarī *kalām* established itself as the dominant school in the central regions of the Islamic world, but not without a struggle.[235] It was not until the famous Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk (active 455–485/1063–1092) established positions in the major madrasas of the empire specifically to teach the new theology that the Ashʿarī school was finally able to triumph over its two rivals: the Muʿtazila, on the one hand, and the strictest of the Ḥanbalīs, on the other.[236]

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[231] Marmura, "Al-Ghazālī," 152.

[232] Nagel, *History*, 242. Al-Harawī's opposition to *kalām* seems to have stemmed as much from his mystical orientation as from his Ḥanbalī commitments. With respect to the view that *kalām* is unnecessary at best and that scripture alone suffices, Tim Winter remarks that "al-Harawī (d. 1089) agrees, suggesting that *kalām* is an unreliable substitute for the true gift of mystical illumination." Winter, *Cambridge Companion*, 5.

[233] Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 57.

[234] On whom see Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqil*.

[235] See Makdisi, "Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites" (to be qualified, however, by Khaled El-Rouayheb's remarks in "From Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī," 295–296 ff.).

[236] Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 61–62. Major representatives of new Ashʿarī *kalām* in

By the time Ibn Taymiyya was born some two hundred years later,[237] any significant opposition to *kalām* theology had all but dissipated in most quarters. Ashʿarī *kalām* had long since been accepted by much of the Sunnī world as the normative, orthodox expression of Islamic belief in rational-theological terms. At the same time, the Mamluk rulers of Syria and Egypt (the two countries where Ibn Taymiyya spent his life) had proved themselves enthusiastic patrons of the now dominant Ashʿarī theology, and also of the many eclectic brands of Sufism—some quite orthodox, others decidedly less so—that had also become widespread. Their patronage meant that conflicts with those who abjured theological speculation and advocated a stricter adherence to the literal text would be unavoidable.[238]

10.2 *Philosophical Theology and the Fate of* Falsafa *Proper*

While al-Ghazālī's attack on the Muslim Peripatetic tradition was long understood in Western scholarship to have spelled the death of philosophy in the Muslim world, this is only true in one limited sense, namely, that there was no continuation of an independent philosophical tradition pursued along the largely Aristotelian lines of classical *falsafa*. One notable exception to this was Ibn Rushd, whose work, however consequential it may have been for medieval Europe, had virtually no impact on the Muslim world itself.[239] On the one hand, alternative schools of philosophy arose and flourished, most notably the Ishrāqī, or "Illuminationist," tradition founded by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī "al-Maqtūl" (executed 587/1191). This tradition reached its culmination in the eleventh-/seventeenth-century synthesis represented by the "transcendent theosophy," or *ḥikma mutaʿāliya*, of the Persian Shīʿī philosopher, theologian, and mystic Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā) (d. 1050/1640)[240] and has survived in Iran up to the present day.[241] On the other hand, a perusal

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the post-Ghazālī period include Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), Ḥāfiẓ al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 701/1301 or 710/1310), ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355), Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390), al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413), Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490), and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 908/1502). On the appropriation of Avicennian thought by the new *kalām*, see Wisnovsky, "Nature and Scope."

[237] That is, in the year 661/1263.

[238] Nagel, *History*, 243.

[239] Ibn Rushd's views on the relationship between reason and revelation are discussed in more detail at the end of the following chapter. For a lucid overview, see Fakhry, *History*, 270–292.

[240] On whom see Rustom, *Triumph of Mercy*.

[241] Fakhry refers to Mullā Ṣadrā as "the last great encyclopedic writer in Islam" and remarks that "his voluminous output is an eloquent disproof of the view expressed by many his-

of later *kalām* works makes it abundantly clear that mainstream Islamic discourse in a sense co-opted, rather than banished, philosophy, absorbing it into the body of *kalām* while bending it to the outlook, purposes, and needs of the discipline.[242]

Contemporary scholars have offered contrasting pictures of the precise nature of the intertwinement of philosophy and theology that took place in the post-Ibn Sīnā / post-Ghazālī period. Earlier scholarship stressed that the philosophers (with the sole exception of al-Kindī) had retained full autonomy in the face of Islamic doctrine,[243] underscoring their reluctance to "surrender any aspect of [philosophy], or to attribute any mark of privilege or distinction to [Islamic belief] by virtue of its supernatural or divine origin."[244] More recent studies, however, have brought to light the (formerly unappreciated) extent to which *falsafa* itself and its practitioners were influenced by *kalām*, not merely in terms of the topics with which they dealt but also in terms of their conceptual vocabulary, discrete arguments, the examples they used, and sometimes even the substantive positions they adopted.[245] Building on the argument that Ibn Sīnā himself had been influenced by *kalām* in developing certain fundamental notions, including the key distinction between essence and existence so central to his thought,[246] it has been suggested that this "theologization"

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torians of Islamic medieval philosophy that by the end of the eleventh century al-Ghazālī had dealt philosophy a crippling blow from which it never recovered" (Fakhry, *History*, 311). For a detailed recent study on the influence of Ibn Sīnā and how it manifests in the work of Mullā Ṣadrā, see Eichner, "Die iranische Philosophie von Ibn Sīnā bis Mullā Ṣadrā."

[242] See Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 325ff. See also Winter's remarks in his introduction to *Cambridge Companion*, esp. 11–14 ("The fate of *falsafa*"), where he observes that "even the most superficial perusal of a late *kalām* work will reveal the immense influence which Avicenna exerted on the framing of Muslim orthodoxy" (Winter, 12). He goes on to remark, following Khaled El-Rouayheb, that "Muslim orthodoxy did not shed Hellenism, but steadily accumulated it, and continued to extol the core Aristotelian discipline of logic, not only in *kalām*, but in law" (Winter, 14). Further, he cites al-Taftāzānī, "author of perhaps the most widely used text of later Muslim theology," to the effect that "the *kalām* folk had 'incorporated most of the physics and metaphysics, and delved deeply into the mathematics, so that but for the *samʿiyyāt*, *kalām* was hardly distinguishable from *falsafa*'" (Winter, 12).

[243] Gardet and Anawati, for instance, argued that although the Muslim philosophers tried hard to maintain the letter of the Qurʾān, they never accepted anything from revelation that went beyond the domain of philosophy proper. See Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 321–323.

[244] Fakhry, *History*, 91.

[245] See, e.g., Wisnovsky, "Notes" and Wisnovsky, "Essence and Existence." See also Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics*, 145–160, 227–244.

[246] See Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics*, 16, 145–180.

of the philosophical tradition may even help explain why Ibn Sīnā's thought spread so rapidly among the *mutakallimūn* and was eventually taken up in so many quarters with such enthusiasm.[247] On the ultimate fate of philosophy as an independent pursuit in the Islamic world, Tim Winter concludes that

> *falsafa* as a discipline was progressively overtaken, or perhaps swallowed up, by Sunnī *kalām* at some point after the twelfth century. Perhaps the reason for this was the same factor which had caused the translation movement to wind down two centuries earlier: the ideas had been successfully transmitted. *Falsafa* functioned as an intermediary school, a module provisionally and imperfectly integrated into Muslim culture which allowed Muslim thinkers to entertain Greek ideas and choose those which seemed to them persuasive and true. As a system, however, it did not possess the resources to survive indefinitely. Once Muslims found that their need for a sophisticated philosophical theology was satisfied by the *kalām*, *falsafa* as an independent discipline naturally withered.[248]

10.3 *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*

One of the main architects of this new "philosophical theology" in the century immediately after al-Ghazālī was the Persian Shāfiʿī theologian and polymath Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209),[249] who has been referred to as "the most outstanding phenomenon in speculative theology in the post-Ghazālī period."[250] He has also been characterized as a "subtle dialectician, possessor of a vast philosophical and theological culture as well as of an intellectual courage rare in his time, [who] is among the leading representatives of Sunnite Islam."[251] More recently, the "breadth of Rāzī's intellectual ambition" has been described as "unprecedented in the history of Islamic civilization."[252] Born in the city of Rayy (near present-day Tehran) in 543/1149, it is al-Rāzī who, coupled with al-Ghazālī, did the most to incorporate the new philosophical approach into the body of *kalām*.[253] In addition to his studies in history, literature, law, theology, medicine, and the natural sciences,[254] al-Rāzī immersed himself in the study of philosophy and was a master of the art of disputation. His thought was profoundly influenced by Ibn Sīnā, but mostly in the way of the philosopher Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. 560/1164 or 1165), a convert from Judaism to Islam whose thought, while steeped in that of Ibn Sīnā, was nevertheless critical of the latter and whose views, on the whole, were closer to orthodox Muslim (and Jewish) theological positions.[255] Al-Rāzī wrote an important work on metaphysics, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya* (Oriental investigations), that manifests his clear debt to Ibn Sīnā but also his rejection of certain central aspects of Ibn Sīnā's system, such as the doctrine of emanation.[256] Nevertheless, al-Rāzī's most important work on theology, *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-mutaʾakhkhirīn min al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-ḥukamāʾ wa-l-mutakallimīn* (The harvest of the thought of the ancients and moderns among scholars, philosophers, and theologians), which begins with an extended disquisition on metaphysics, epistemology, and logic, clearly shows the increasing influence of the terms and categories of philosophy in the discourse of *kalām*. Indeed, al-Rāzī's inclusion of a metaphysical preamble to the *Muḥaṣṣal* became standard in subsequent works of Ashʿarī *kalām*.

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[247] See, e.g., Winter's remarks at *Cambridge Companion*, 11.

[248] Ibid., 13.

[249] For background on al-Rāzī's life and works, see Street, "Concerning the Life and Works," as well as Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life." For immediate intellectual antecedents, see Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī." For al-Rāzī's thought in general, and his theological and philosophical views in particular, see al-Zarkān, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*; Arnaldez, "L'œuvre"; and Jaffer, *Rāzī*. On al-Rāzī's polemical entanglements with Muʿtazilīs, Karrāmīs, and others, see Kraus, "'Controversies.'"

[250] "die hervorragendste Erscheinung der spekulativen Theologie der nach-ġazālischen Zeit." Goldziher, "Aus der Theologie," 223.

[251] Kraus, "'Controversies,'" 131.

[252] Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 10.

Contemporary scholars have brought considerable nuance to our understanding of al-Rāzī's thought. Ayman Shihadeh traces the crucial developments in sixth-/twelfth-century philosophical theology that led from al-Ghazālī, who died at the beginning of that century, to al-Rāzī, who died almost exactly one hundred years later.[257] He elucidates al-Rāzī's ethical theory, taking up age-old theological questions concerning the ethical nature as well as the ontological instantiation of human acts.[258] More relevant to our concerns, Shihadeh deals in depth with al-Rāzī's apparent late-life skepticism concerning the ability of reason to yield certain knowledge,[259] a theme to which we shall return at several junctures in the course of subsequent investigations.

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[253] Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 94.

[254] For a list of seventy-six treatises ascribed to al-Rāzī across a wide range of disciplines, see Muhibbu-Din, "Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: Philosophical Theology in *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*," 58–62.

[255] Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 94. On the philosophical and theological developments that occurred between al-Ghazālī and Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, see Griffel, "Between al-Ghazālī and Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī."

[256] Fakhry, *History*, 319–321.

[257] See Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī." On these developments, see also Griffel, "Theology Engages with Avicennan Philosophy."

[258] See Ayman Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*.

In a volume on the medieval reception of Ibn Sīnā's metaphysics,[260] Heidrun Eichner traces the major role al-Rāzī played in "shaping the reception and interpretation of Avicennian ontology" and identifies his compendium *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī al-ḥikma wa-l-manṭiq* (The epitome on philosophy and logic) as "one of the most influential works in the Arabic reception of Avicennian philosophy from the late thirteenth century onwards."[261] Al-Rāzī's influential presentation of Ibn Sīnā's positions does not necessarily mean that he always agreed with them. In fact, he often explicates them only to argue an alternative position against them. On some occasions, al-Rāzī does not faithfully represent Ibn Sīnā's positions; furthermore, he uses a vocabulary that is not always adequate to render Ibn Sīnā's thought.[262] On another note, al-Rāzī has been identified as "the most prominent exponent of the thesis that existence is superadded to quiddity,"[263] a view that Ibn Taymiyya ascribes to the Muslim Peripatetic philosophers and that forms a main crux in his attack on their ontology. It is of note that al-Rāzī maintained this view in opposition to al-Ashʿarī himself, albeit with the (from an Ashʿarī perspective) very commendable goal of maintaining God's willful *creation* of the world as opposed to His mere, as it were automatic, *necessitation* of it as conceptualized by Ibn Sīnā.[264]

Finally, Tariq Jaffer has dedicated a full monograph to al-Rāzī[265] in which he elaborates in depth on al-Rāzī's endeavor to establish Islamic (specifically Ashʿarī) theology on the most solid rational foundations possible. Significantly, al-Rāzī undertakes this ambitious project not merely by means of the received medium of the formal theological or philosophical treatise but even more so through his massive, 32-volume Qurʾānic commentary, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (Keys of the unseen), also known simply as *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (The grand *tafsīr*).[266]

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[259] On al-Rāzī's eventual skepticism and epistemological pessimism, see Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 181–203. Al-Rāzī's pessimism stands in marked contrast to Ibn Taymiyya's overall confidence in sound human reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*) and his concomitant optimism, in both the epistemological and the ethical realms. See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 1–6, 224–237.

[260] Hasse and Bertolacci, eds., *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics*.

[261] See Eichner, "Essence and Existence," 123.

[262] Ibid., 124.

[263] Wisnovsky, "Essence and Existence," 29, 42–43.

[264] For details, see ibid., 40–44; also, on a somewhat related question, Abrahamov, "Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī."

[265] Jaffer, *Rāzī*.

[266] Ibn Taymiyya is reported to have quipped that this massive work "contains everything but *tafsīr*," to which the Ashʿarī jurist Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 725/1325) retorted that, in

Jaffer argues that "by using the Qurʾān to express his philosophical theology, Rāzī gave his revolutionary agenda an undisputed authority in Sunnī Islam."[267] By bringing about a "grand synthesis of ideas" through his *tafsīr*, al-Rāzī sought to achieve three overriding objectives,[268] one of which was to synthesize Islamic revelation with the rich Aristotelian-Avicennian philosophical tradition that had gained such prominence in the century before al-Rāzī, thereby extending to this tradition the sanctioning mantle of the Qurʾān.

Al-Rāzī's other two main objectives are, in fact, also central to Ibn Taymiyya's project in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*. The first of these was to put the science of *tafsīr*—and thereby of theology more generally—on a firm epistemological footing by grounding it in rigorous rational and logical principles that would act as a control on the possible meanings that could be derived from the revealed texts. It is partly in pursuit of this goal that al-Rāzī (following al-Ghazālī and others) articulated the universal rule of interpretation,[269] which explicitly prioritizes reason over revelation when adjudicating any possible conflicts between the two. Ibn Taymiyya cites this rule of interpretation on the first page of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, then declares that he has dedicated the entirety of the work to refuting it. (We examine this universal rule, and Ibn Taymiyya's response to it, in detail in chapter 3.)[270] After establishing reason as the arbiter in interpreting revelation, al-Rāzī's final goal is to "demonstrate the Qurʾān's pre-eminence by disclosing that its method of reasoning coincides with the human intellect's procedure of discursive reasoning and the conclusions reached by it."[271]

These lines could just as easily have been written about Ibn Taymiyya, for whom the natural concord between the deliverances of human reason and the declarations of revelation is, in fact, the principal thesis of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*. But before delving into Ibn Taymiyya's work, we would do well first to acquaint ourselves with the man himself.

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fact, it "contains everything along with *tafsīr*." See Maʿṣūmī, "Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and His Critics," 357.

[267] Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 14. See also, on the epistemological aspects of al-Rāzī's grand *tafsīr*, Oulddali, *Raison et révélation en Islam*.

[268] Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 14.

[269] Known variously as "*al-qānūn al-kullī*" (the universal rule), "*qānūn al-taʾwīl*" (the rule of interpretation), or "*al-qānūn al-kullī fī al-taʾwīl*" (the universal rule of interpretation). Chapter 3 of the present work is dedicated to a detailed examination of this universal rule and Ibn Taymiyya's numerous arguments against it.

[270] Jaffer deals with al-Rāzī's principles of interpretation in detail at Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 54–83 and with al-Rāzī's proposed reconciliation of reason and revelation on the basis of these principles at Jaffer, 84–130. The last section of Jaffer's treatment (pp. 117–130) consists, in fact, of a summary of Ibn Taymiyya's response in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* to al-Rāzī's version of the *qānūn*.

[271] Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 14.

CHAPTER 2

Ibn Taymiyya: Life, Times, and Intellectual Profile

1 The Life and Times of Ibn Taymiyya (661–728/1263–1328)

The previous chapter provided an overview of the development of the Islamic intellectual tradition over the course of the seven centuries preceding Ibn Taymiyya, with special emphasis on those aspects most relevant to our main concern—the relationship between reason and revelation—as we can piece them together from various Muslim theological, historical, and heresiographical works, as well as the secondary source materials that are based on and that analyze these works. The current section complements this background with a brief overview of the political and social circumstances of Ibn Taymiyya's tumultuous life, followed by his biography, intellectual profile, reception by his contemporaries, and an overview of his major works that bear relevance to the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*.

The chaotic intellectual climate into which Ibn Taymiyya was born was matched by the political uncertainty and fragmentation of his times.[1] Born in the city of Harran (located in current-day southeastern Turkey near the Syrian border) in the year 661/1263,[2] Ibn Taymiyya's family fled southwest to Damascus

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[1] For general studies on the political background of Ibn Taymiyya's times, see Irwin, *Middle East in the Middle Ages* and Northrup, "Baḥrī Mamlūk Sultanate." On the Mongol incursion into Syria in the year 700/1300 (in the resistance to which Ibn Taymiyya played a pivotal role), see Amitai, "The Mongol Occupation of Damascus in 1300." On the cultural and social backdrop of the period, see Berkey, "Culture and Society during the Late Middle Ages." Concerning the religious life of the period, see Little, "Religion under the Mamluks" and Pouzet, *Damas au VIIè/XIIIè siècle*, 20–105.

[2] The most complete and authoritative single source for the life of Ibn Taymiyya is Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī's (d. 744/1344) *al-ʿUqūd al-durriyya*. Other important sources for the biography of Ibn Taymiyya include al-Dhahabī's (d. 748/1348) *Kitāb Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ* and his *al-Iʿlām bi-wafayāt al-aʿlām*, Ibn Kathīr's (d. 774/1373) *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, Ibn al-Dawādārī's (fl. 708–735/1309–1335) *Kanz al-durar*, Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī's (d. 795/1393) *al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, and al-Kutubī's (d. 764/1362) *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, which is a supplement to Ibn Khallikān's (d. 681/1282) famous *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*. Later works include Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's (d. 852/1448) *al-Durar al-kāmina*, al-ʿUlaymī's (d. 928/1521) *al-Manhaj al-aḥmad*, al-Karmī's (d. 1033/1624) *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*, al-Shawkānī's (d. 1250/1834) *al-Badr al-ṭāliʿ*, and al-Ālūsī's (d. 1295/1899) *Jalāʾ al-ʿaynayn*. For a detailed discussion of the classical Arabic sources for the biography of Ibn Taymiyya, see Little, "Historical and Historiographical Significance," 313–318 and *passim*. For an excellent contemporary study in Arabic, see Abū Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya*; also Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Taymiyya*. The most extensive treatment of Ibn Taymiyya's

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in 667/1269 before the westward advance of the Mongols, who had reached the gates of northern Syria when Ibn Taymiyya was only six years old. Greater Syria had fallen under the influence of petty amirs who, in their infighting and general ineptitude, proved incapable of mounting any credible resistance to the advancing Mongol armies while Egypt—generally safe from the menace of a direct Mongol onslaught—was under the rule of the Baḥrī Mamluk dynasty.

After fleeing Harran,[3] the Taymiyya family settled in the Ḥanbalī quarter of Damascus, where Ibn Taymiyya's father served as the director of the Sukkariyya Ḥanbalī madrasa, located in the shadows of the Ḥanbalī gate outside the walls of Old Damascus. It was in this madrasa that Ibn Taymiyya received his principal education, following in the footsteps of his uncle, Fakhr al-Dīn b. Taymiyya (d. 622/1225), and his paternal grandfather, Majd al-Dīn b. Taymiyya (d. 653/1255), both of whom had distinguished themselves as important authorities of the contemporary Ḥanbalī school.[4] Though Ibn Taymiyya studied with a large number of scholars (including a number of women)[5] over the course of his education, his strength and independence of mind were such that none of his various mentors exercised a sufficient influence on his thinking for Ibn Taymiyya to be considered his (or her) disciple.[6] Ibn Taymiyya eventually succeeded his father as director of the Sukkariyya madrasa and gave his first public lesson there at just twenty-one years of age. One year later, he began teaching Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) at the famous Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and, a decade later, took up teaching at the Ḥanbaliyya madrasa in Damascus after the

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life and thought in a European language remains Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Takī-d-Dīn Ahmad b. Taimīya* [hereafter *Essai*]. Shorter studies include Laoust, "L'influence d'Ibn-Taymiyya" and Laoust, "La biographie d'Ibn Taimiya d'après Ibn Kaṯīr," which is a summary of Ibn Kathīr's *Bidāya* (see above). See as well more recent works such as Bori, *Ibn Taymiyya: una vita esemplare* and Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya *wa-Jamāʿatu-hu*," as well as Adem, "Intellectual Genealogy." On Ibn Taymiyya's influence, see primarily Laoust, "L'influence" and El-Rouayheb, "From Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī."

[3] The following account of Ibn Taymiyya's life paraphrases, in the main, Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya," EI², 3:951–955, supplemented by numerous more recent studies as indicated throughout the notes. For a more detailed account of these events, see Laoust, "La biographie," 115–162; Laoust, *Essai*, 110–150; and Murad, "Ibn Taymiyyah."

[4] For a detailed presentation of Ibn Taymiyya's education and intellectual training, see Laoust, *Essai*, 71–109.

[5] Al-Matroudi (*Ḥanbalī School*, 16) mentions that Ibn Taymiyya had a large number of teachers, with some sources claiming up to two hundred. He further reports on a *mashyakha* (list of teachers) of Ibn Taymiyya's, related by al-Dhahabī, that includes forty-one male teachers and four female teachers (*shaykhāt*). Al-Matroudi, 200, n. 124.

[6] Laoust, *Essai*, 71–72. For an extensive discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's scholarly genealogy, see Adem, "Intellectual Genealogy," 454–467.

death of one of his teachers there. At around the same time, he was offered the prestigious and much coveted position of chief justice (*qāḍī al-quḍāh*), which, however, he turned down.[7] In addition to a strong grounding in Ḥanbalī law and jurisprudence, Ibn Taymiyya is also said to have gained such an expert knowledge of the other schools of law—and from each school's authoritative primary sources—that he never discussed legal matters with a scholar from one of these other schools without his interlocutor having learned, by the end of the discussion, something of value about his own school from Ibn Taymiyya.[8] In addition to his impressive training in law, Ibn Taymiyya was particularly well grounded in *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* and read avidly in the fields of philosophy and theology, as well as the existing Muslim heresiographical literature.[9] Indeed, through the vast and varied corpus of his writings, Ibn Taymiyya exhibits an almost astonishing familiarity with all the major schools of thought, as well as the particular writings, of most of the philosophers and theologians before his time. This is what led Yahya Michot, as noted in the introduction (p. 9 above), to characterize Ibn Taymiyya as "the most important reader of the *falāsifah* after Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in the Sunnī world."[10] Ibn Taymiyya was a bold and formidable debater as well, which, coupled with the enormous range and depth of his erudition, guaranteed that he rarely, if ever, lost a debate.[11]

Ibn Taymiyya was a public intellectual par excellence whose feet were firmly planted in the social and political realities of his day. Indeed, the external political turbulence of his times closely resembled the many vicissitudes of his own personal and professional life. Ibn Taymiyya's boldness in defending and proclaiming his views, coupled with his undisputed reputation for great personal uprightness and high moral integrity, won him many admirers among the common folk and the political and intellectual elite alike. Nevertheless, the idiosyncratic and often controversial nature of some of his views, doubtless exacerbated by his often condescending and vituperative tone and his self-admitted inclination towards irascibility, earned him numerous powerful opponents as well. All told, over the course of his sixty-five years of life, Ibn Taymiyya was summoned to trial nine times, exiled twice (from Damascus to

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[7] Umaruddin, "Ibn Taimiyya," 718.

[8] Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, *ʿUqūd*, 10. On Ibn Taymiyya's "intellectual anatomy," see Adem, "Intellectual Genealogy," 467–480.

[9] Such as al-Ashʿarī's *Kitāb Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* or al-Shahrastānī's *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*.

[10] "le plus important lecteur des *falāsifah* après Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī dans le monde sunnite." Michot, "Vanités intellectuelles," 599.

[11] See Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, *ʿUqūd*, 10.

Cairo, then from Cairo to Alexandria), twice ordered to desist from giving *fatwā*s, and imprisoned on six separate occasions for a total duration of more than six years.[12]

Ibn Taymiyya's first foray into political life took place in the year 693/1294, when a Christian by the name of ʿAssāf ("ʿAssāf al-Naṣrānī") was alleged to have publicly insulted the Prophet Muḥammad, a punishable offense under Islamic law. Ibn Taymiyya and another shaykh brought the matter to the attention of the viceroy (*nāʾib al-salṭana*), who summoned ʿAssāf to a hearing. A public disturbance ensued, whereupon the viceroy had the two shaykhs flogged and briefly detained.[13] Several years later, in 698/1299, Ibn Taymiyya wrote one of his most famous statements of creed, *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya al-kubrā*, which was hostile to Ashʿarī theology and to *kalām* in general.[14] Ibn Taymiyya's opponents from among the *mutakallimūn* accused him of anthropomorphism on account of this creed, whereupon he was summoned to questioning at the home of the Shāfiʿī *qāḍī* Jalāl al-Dīn [also known as Imām al-Dīn] b. ʿUmar al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338). After a close review of the text of the *Ḥamawiyya* and Ibn Taymiyya's detailed explication of it during this session, he was acquitted of all charges and permitted to continue his teaching and writing.

The events of the following few years called upon Ibn Taymiyya to take an active political, and even military, role on a number of occasions. During the Mongol invasion of Damascus in 699/1300, Ibn Taymiyya was one of the spokesmen of the resistance party in Damascus sent to negotiate with the Īlkhān Ghāzān, leader of the invading forces. Thanks to his forceful pleading, Ibn Taymiyya was able to negotiate the release of many prisoners as well as to obtain a declaration of peace for the city's inhabitants.[15] Later that year, he took part in an expedition under Mamluk command against the Shīʿa of Kasrawān, who were accused of collaborating with both the Mongols and the crusaders. Shortly thereafter, in the face of a second Mongol threat, Ibn Taymiyya was bidden to exhort the populace to mount a defense, and he traveled all the way to Cairo to beseech the Mamluk sultan, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (r. 709–741/1310–1341), to dispatch an army to Syria. Ibn Taymiyya also fought at the battle of Shaqḥab in 702/1303, which resulted in a victory against a third Mongol invasion, and in 704/1305, he participated in a renewed campaign against the Shīʿa of Kasrawān.

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[12] Little, "Historical and Historiographical Significance," 313.

[13] Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 17:665–666. On this incident, see also Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya," 853–854.

[14] Laoust speaks of the "insolent mépris avec lequel Ibn Taymiyya s' en prenait à la légitimité de la théologie spéculative" (the insolent contempt with which Ibn Taymiyya went after the legitimacy of speculative theology). Laoust, "L' influence," 15. See the detailed analysis and discussion of *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya* in Adem, "Intellectual Genealogy," 483–533.

[15] Umaruddin, "Ibn Taimiyya," 718.

After these political engagements, Ibn Taymiyya returned to his scholarly writing and debates. On one occasion during this period, he is reported to have led a party of stonemasons to smash a sacred rock that was being venerated in the mosque of Naranj. He also sent a letter to the shaykh Naṣr al-Manbijī (d. 719/1319), a leading member of the Damascene disciples of the Andalusian Sufi Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), in which he politely but roundly condemned this latter's increasingly popular, yet highly controversial, mystical monism.[16] Around the same time, Ibn Taymiyya's opponents raised a second round of doubts surrounding the orthodoxy of his belief, this time on the basis of a second statement of creed, known as *al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya*.[17] Two councils[18] were held back to back in 705/1306 at the residence of the governor of Damascus; during the second, a pupil of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, that master of late Ashʿarī philosophical *kalām*, judged Ibn Taymiyya's *Wāsiṭiyya* to be "in conformity with the Qurʾān and Sunna." Nevertheless, a Shāfiʿī judge, Najm al-Dīn b. Ṣaṣrā (d. 723/1322),[19] immediately reopened the case against the *Wāsiṭiyya*, and a third council was held by order of the sultan. This time, too, the council refrained from condemning the treatise, whereupon Ibn Ṣaṣrā resigned and, along with Ibn Taymiyya, was banished to Cairo several months later. Immediately upon his arrival in Cairo, Ibn Taymiyya was summoned before yet another council, this one composed of high-ranking Mamluk officials and the four chief *qāḍī*s of Egypt. The council convicted him of propagating anthropomorphic views and sentenced him to prison in the citadel of Cairo. After eighteen months of internment, Ibn Taymiyya was freed but was not permitted to return to Syria.

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[16] For the text of this letter, see Ibn Taymiyya, "Kitāb Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya ilā al-ʿārif bi-Llāh al-Shaykh al-Naṣr al-Manbijī," in *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʾil*, 1:161–183. It also appears in *Majmūʿ fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya* [hereafter *MF*], 2:452–479.

[17] There is some question whether it was *al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya* that landed Ibn Taymiyya before the Damascus tribunal or whether his troubles were a result of his activities and theological positions in general and he simply used the *Wāsiṭiyya* as evidence to expound his creed in detail before his jurors. On this question, see Jackson, "Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial," 49–51 (esp. at 49, n. 53). For a translation of the *Wāsiṭiyya* with an introduction and notes, see Swartz, "A Seventh-Century (A.H.) Sunnī Creed," 91–131 and, before him, Laoust, *La profession de foi d'Ibn Taymiyya*. For the specific charges brought against the *Wāsiṭiyya*, see Swartz, "Seventh-Century (A.H.) Sunnī Creed," 101–102.

[18] For a detailed study of the Damascus trials, including a presentation of all the actors involved as well as a translation and discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's own first-person account of their proceedings, see Jackson, "Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial." See also Little, "Historical and Historiographical Significance."

[19] On the correct pronunciation of this name as "Ibn Ṣaṣrā," as opposed to "Ibn Ṣaṣarī" or other variant pronunciations often given in Western sources, see Jackson, "Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial," 46, n. 20 (following W.M. Brinner's conclusions in "The Banū Ṣaṣrā").

In Cairo, Ibn Taymiyya continued to denounce various beliefs and practices that he considered *bidʿa* (reprehensible innovation). This earned him the opposition, in the year 707/1308, of the influential Sufi shaykh of the Shādhilī order Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309) and another prominent Sufi, Karīm al-Dīn al-Āmulī (d. 710/1310 or 1311). At issue was Ibn Taymiyya's vocal opposition to the practice, widely accepted by both Sufis and the majority of legal scholars, of *tawassul* (or *istighātha*), a form of supplication for divine assistance through the intermediary of the Prophet Muḥammad or another person of high spiritual rank, known as a *walī* (pl. *awliyāʾ*). Ibn Taymiyya declared *tawassul* prohibited, as he saw in it a subtle form of *shirk* (idolatry). He feared that this practice (sometimes referred to as "maraboutism," or the "cult of saints"), if taken to an extreme, could shift a believer's primary spiritual focus from God to created beings, however pious the latter may have been. In the wake of a popular demonstration against him, Ibn Taymiyya was called before a Shāfiʿī judge in Cairo and asked to clarify his views on *tawassul*. The judge apparently acquitted him, as he was officially granted permission to return to Syria; nevertheless, he was held in prison in Cairo for several additional months.

One year later, in 708/1309, Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Jāshnikīr (d. 709/1310), a disciple of the aforementioned shaykh Naṣr al-Manbijī, was proclaimed sultan.[20] The new sultan's alignment with the Sufi forces that Ibn Taymiyya had directly opposed led to a new round of recriminations against him. Ibn Taymiyya was arrested and exiled to Alexandria, where he was imprisoned for seven months in the tower of the sultan's palace. During this period, he wrote several important works, most notably his *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn* (Refutation of the logicians)[21]—a work that Wael Hallaq has described as "one of the most devastating attacks ever leveled against the logical system upheld by the early Greeks, the later commentators, and their Muslim followers"[22] and whose theme is central to Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the philosophical and theological methods he blames for engendering the famous "contradiction" between reason and revelation that he sets out to refute in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*.

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[20] His rule, however, lasted a mere ten months and twenty-four days and ended with his arrest and execution at the order of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, under whose second reign (699–708/1299–1309) Baybars had served as vice-sultan of Egypt. See Fernandes, "Baybars II, al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Jāshnikīr," *EI*^{3} (2012-4), 34.

[21] See Hallaq, *Greek Logicians* for an introduction to this work and a translation of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's abridgement of it (called *Jahd al-qarīḥa fī tajrīd al-Naṣīḥa*).

[22] Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xi.

The following year, Ibn Taymiyya was released from captivity in Alexandria and returned to Cairo, where he taught privately and continued writing for three years until 712/1313, when a new Mongol threat occasioned his return to Damascus. Around the same time, a new governor of Damascus was appointed and Ibn Taymiyya was promoted to the rank of professor. By this time, his supporters esteemed him an independent *mujtahid*, and it was during this period that he began training his most talented and influential pupil, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), who did much to synthesize, organize, and popularize his master's teachings. It is also likely during this period that Ibn Taymiyya wrote the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*.[23] Relations between Ḥanbalīs and Ashʿarīs in Damascus remained troubled, however, and in 716/1316, open rivalry broke out between them, once more pitting the two schools against each other over questions of creed.

By the year 718/1318, trouble flared up once again, this time in conjunction with Ibn Taymiyya's ruling—against the consensus opinion (*ijmāʿ*) of the four legal schools, including his own Ḥanbalī *madhhab*—that a triple divorce formula uttered in one sitting counted only as a single repudiation and, hence, was insufficient to bring about an irrevocable divorce (*ṭalāq*) if the man uttering it had not intended such.[24] The sultan ordered Ibn Taymiyya to stop issuing *fatwā*s on divorce that did not conform to the doctrine of the Ḥanbalī school, and two councils were held, one in 718/1318 and the other in 719/1319, to investigate the matter further. Ibn Taymiyya was acquitted after these two hearings, but a third council, held in 720/1320, charged him with insubordination for disobeying the sultan's order to refrain from giving *fatwā*s. At the close of this third hearing, Ibn Taymiyya was arrested and imprisoned for five months in the citadel of Damascus. For six years following his release from prison in 721/1321, he continued teaching and writing and is also reported to have become involved numerous times in the politics and public religious life of both Syria and Egypt.

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[23] See Muḥammad Rashād Sālim's discussion in his introduction to the *Darʾ*, 1:7–10, as well as Hoover's summary and comments in *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 11, n. 23.

[24] On the question of Ibn Taymiyya and the triple *ṭalāq*, see Rapoport, "Ibn Taymiyya on Divorce Oaths," as well as Laoust, *Essai*, 422–434. See also Al-Matroudi, *Ḥanbalī School*, chap. 6, where the author argues that a careful study of the evidence reveals that Ibn Taymiyya's stance on *ṭalāq* in fact agrees with that of some scholars in other schools of law, but that he was indeed the first Ḥanbalī (though not the last) to hold this position.

In 726/1326, Ibn Taymiyya was again arrested, deprived of the right to issue *fatwā*s, and thrown back into the citadel in Damascus, where he remained for two full years. At issue this time was his treatise *al-Risāla fī ziyārat al-qubūr wa-l-istinjād bi-l-maqbūr* (Treatise on the visitation of graves and seeking aid from the buried), in which he attacked the practice of visiting the graves of righteous people (*awliyāʾ*) for the purpose of making *tawassul* through them.[25] This time, Ibn Taymiyya faced the opposition of two more influential figures, the Mālikī chief judge Taqī al-Dīn al-Ikhnāʾī (d. 750/1349) and the Shāfiʿī chief judge ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 729/1329), a follower of Ibn ʿArabī—a combined opposition that perhaps explains the length of his sentence. Ibn Taymiyya continued to write from the Damascus citadel, producing, among other works, a treatise in which he leveled a personal attack against al-Ikhnāʾī and expounded his views on visiting and supplicating at the graves of the *awliyāʾ*. A complaint from al-Ikhnāʾī prompted the sultan to order that Ibn Taymiyya be deprived of all paper, ink, and pens.

Five months after this final edict from the sultan, on 20 Dhū al-Qaʿda 728/26 September 1328, Ibn Taymiyya, as if overwhelmed by chagrin at being denied the means to write, passed away in his cell at the citadel. Despite such strong and persistent opposition from certain quarters, Ibn Taymiyya had endeared himself to the majority of the population of Damascus, who saw in him a scholar of great personal integrity, religious scrupulousness, and fearless valiance in confronting the greatest social and political dangers of his day, all the way to the battlefield when necessary. Indeed, it is reported that from the time of his death until his burial, "the normal life of Damascus came to a virtual standstill."[26] After his funeral, which was attended by a large number of the city's inhabitants, including an unusually large number of women,[27] Ibn Taymiyya was laid to rest in the Sufi cemetery at Damascus, where his tomb—for all his disapproval of visiting the graves of the pious—is still honored to this day.

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[25] For a discussion, see Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, esp. 168–194.

[26] Swartz, "Seventh-Century (A.H.) Sunnī Creed," 99 (referencing Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:405–407).

[27] For an insightful treatment of Ibn Taymiyya's emotional and psychological profile—and specifically his relationship to women, his relationship with his mother, the fact of his lifelong celibacy, and related issues—see Michot, "Un célibataire endurci et sa maman." For a description of Ibn Taymiyya's funeral, underscoring "l' importance de la participation féminine à ses obsèques" (the large number of women who took part in his funeral) and citing, on the authority of Ibn Kathīr, the figure of fifteen thousand women in attendance, see Michot, 165 ff. Michot also cites (p. 167, from Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī's *ʿUqūd*) a certain ʿAbd Allāh

TABLE 2 Overview of Ibn Taymiyya's biography

661/1263	Ibn Taymiyya is born in the city of Harran, in current-day southeastern Turkey.
667/1269	Taymiyya family flees Mongol invasions and takes refuge in the Ḥanbalī quarter of Damascus.
683/1284	Ibn Taymiyya succeeds his father as director of the Sukkariyya Ḥanbalī madrasa, located in Damascus.
684/1285	Begins teaching Qurʾānic exegesis at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.
693/1294	Begins teaching at the Ḥanbaliyya madrasa in Damascus subsequent to the death of one of his teachers.
693/1294	The incident of ʿAssāf al-Naṣrānī occasions Ibn Taymiyya's first foray into political life and his first stint in prison.
698/1299	Ibn Taymiyya writes one of his most famous statements of creed, *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya*.
699/1300	Mongols attack Damascus. Ibn Taymiyya negotiates release of prisoners. Takes part in expedition against the Shīʿa of Kasrawān.
700/1301	Travels to Cairo to implore Mamluk sultan, al-Nāṣir b. Qalāwūn, to dispatch an army to Syria.
702/1303	Ibn Taymiyya fights at Shaqḥab, participating in the victory against a third Mongol invasion.
704/1305	Takes part in a renewed campaign against the Shīʿa of Kasrawān. Sends a letter to the Sufi shaykh Naṣr al-Manbijī condemning Ibn ʿArabī's mystical monism.
705/1306	Two councils are held on the orthodoxy of Ibn Taymiyya's belief as expounded in his *al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya*. Banished to Cairo after a third council. Convicted by a further council of propagating anthropomorphic views and sentenced to prison in the citadel of Cairo.
707/1307	Set free after eighteen months of imprisonment, but not permitted to return to Syria.
707/1308	Questioned by Shāfiʿī judge in Cairo concerning his views on *tawassul*. Acquitted and officially granted permission to return to Syria, but held in prison in Cairo for several additional months.
708/1309	Ibn Taymiyya is arrested, exiled to Alexandria, and held for seven months in the tower of the sultan's palace. Writes several important works, most notably his *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn* (Refutation of the logicians).
709/1310	Released from captivity in Alexandria. Returns to Cairo to teach privately and continue writing.
712/1313	Returns to Damascus on account of a new Mongol threat from the north. Promoted to the rank of professor by the new governor of Damascus.

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al-Ḥarīrī al-Mutayyam (d. 731/1331), who speaks of hundreds of thousands (*miʾīna ulūfan*) of weeping attendees and "multitude upon multitude" (*fawja baʿda fawja*) of believing women. See Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, *ʿUqūd*, 370, lines 6 and 8.

TABLE 2 Overview of Ibn Taymiyya's biography (*cont.*)

713–717/1313–1317	Period during which Ibn Taymiyya (most likely) composed the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*.
718/1318	Ordered by the sultan to stop issuing *fatwā*s on divorce that do not conform to the doctrine of the Ḥanbalī school. First council held on Ibn Taymiyya's divorce *fatwā*.
719/1319	Second council held on Ibn Taymiyya's divorce *fatwā*.
720/1320	A third council charges Ibn Taymiyya with insubordination for refusing to obey the sultan's order to stop issuing *fatwā*s. Arrested and imprisoned in the citadel of Damascus for five months.
721/1321	Released from prison. Continues teaching and writing for the next six years. Becomes involved in the political and public religious life of both Syria and Egypt on numerous occasions.
726/1326	Arrested for the sixth time, confined once more to the citadel of Damascus, and denied the right to issue any *fatwā*s whatsoever.
738/1328	Ibn Taymiyya is deprived of paper, ink, and pens. Passes away several months later, on 20 Dhū al-Qaʿda / 26 September, in his cell at the Damascus citadel.

2 Intellectual Profile

We have mentioned the extraordinary breadth and depth of Ibn Taymiyya's erudition not only in the text-based sciences—law, *ḥadīth*, Qurʾān, and the biographical literature of the Prophet, Companions, and early generations—but also in the rational sciences of *kalām* and philosophy, with both of which his writings exhibit an astonishingly deep familiarity.[28] Ibn Taymiyya also read widely in the works of the Sufi tradition, including those of such luminaries as Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 297/910), Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996),[29] Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1073), al-Ghazālī, and Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234),[30] not to mention two Ḥanbalī

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[28] For an in-depth study on the versatility, originality, and synthetic quality of Ibn Taymiyya's thought and methodology, specifically with regard to the question of the "Satanic verses" incident (*al-gharānīq*), see Shahab Ahmed's rich discussion in S. Ahmed, "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Satanic Verses."

[29] Whose famous work, *Qūt al-qulūb* (Nourishment of the hearts), was one of Ibn Taymiyya's favorite books. Laoust, "L'influence," 19.

[30] His full name is Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, not to be confused with Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl, the Ishrāqī mystic put to death in Aleppo in 587/1191. See p. 72 above.

Sufis, the aforementioned ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī and the famous ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166).[31] While Ibn Taymiyya expressed great admiration for such figures, repeatedly referring to them by laudatory epithets such as "our shaykh," he nevertheless denounced unflinchingly and unconditionally the speculative mystical system of Ibn ʿArabī and his followers, such as Ibn ʿArabī's foremost disciple, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), as well as ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq b. Sabʿīn (d. 669/1271), ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291), and other Sufis, such as the *ḥadīth* scholar and master poet ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), who adopted a similar metaphysical outlook.[32]

Despite his intellectual independence, Ibn Taymiyya maintained his affiliation with the Ḥanbalī school throughout his life, an affiliation that implied as much a theological outlook as an approach to law and legal theory. In terms of law, Ibn Taymiyya followed closely the principles of legal derivation exemplified by the school's eponym, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, whose methodology he believed, in comparison to those of the other schools of law, to have remained most closely in tune with the legal practices and spirit of the authoritative early community (that is, the generations of the Salaf).[33] Ḥanbalī jurisprudence is characterized by a particularly strong emphasis on adherence to the revealed texts (Qurʾān and Sunna) and to the authority of the early community, and it takes a comparatively more cautious attitude towards the use of analogy (*qiyās*) in legal derivation.[34] At the same time, however, Ibn Taymiyya opposed what he saw as the exaggerated weight accorded to the principle of moral scrupulousness (*waraʿ*) used by many Ḥanbalī scholars in deriving the law.[35]

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[31] On whose *Futūḥ al-ghayb* (Revelations of the unseen) he even saw fit to write a partial commentary. See Michel, "Ibn Taymiyya's *Sharḥ*." For a discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's personal affiliation with the Qādirī Sufi order, see Makdisi, "Ibn Taimīya: A Ṣūfī of the Qādirīya Order." However, as noted by Caterina Bori ("Ibn Taymiyya *wa-Jamāʿatu-hu*," 46, n. 17), Makdisi's conclusions must now be qualified by subsequent studies, including Michel, "Ibn Taymiyya's *Sharḥ*"; Meier, "Das Sauberste über die Vorherbestimmung" (published in an English translation as "The Cleanest about Predestination"); and Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 314, n. 5.

[32] Ibn Taymiyya's reputation for being implacably anti-Sufi is inaccurate and misleading when indiscriminately generalized, but it is not entirely without foundation as he was indeed staunchly—and very vocally—opposed to discrete ideas and practices that were widely associated with Sufism in his day. For Ibn Taymiyya's critiques of such aspects of contemporary Sufism, critiques that are responsible not only for the stereotype we have inherited of him today but also for a considerable amount of the opposition and tribulations he faced in his own day, see the following studies: Homerin, "Sufis and their Detractors," esp. 231–235; Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 87–112; Michel, *Muslim Theologian's Response*, 5–14, 24–39; and Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle against Popular Religion*. See further Wael Hallaq's incisive comments in *Greek Logicians*, esp. xi–xiv.

[33] Laoust, *Essai*, 76. Ibn Taymiyya is reported to have written a full volume on the preferability (*tafḍīl*) of the Ḥanbalī *madhhab* and its merits. See Ibn Rushayyiq, *Asmāʾ muʾallafāt Ibn Taymiyya* [hereafter *Asmāʾ muʾallafāt*], 27.

Overall, Ibn Taymiyya's thought evidences a strong preference for the methodology of *ahl al-ḥadīth* over that of *ahl al-raʾy*, commending the way of Mālik in the Hijaz over that of contemporary Iraqi scholars and maintaining that it was Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal who had ultimately perfected Mālik's *ḥadīth*-based methodology.[36] In places, he praises the Ḥanbalī school for its strict adherence to the Qurʾān and Sunna and to the opinions of the Salaf.[37] He also lauds the school for its relative unity, describing its scholars as having fewer points of disagreement (*ikhtilāf*) among themselves than the adherents of the other legal schools.[38] As prefigured in our "Taymiyyan pyramid,"[39] Ibn Taymiyya posits a strong correlation between truth and unanimity and identifies the amount of internal disagreement among the members of a given school—be it of law, theology, or any other discipline—as a tell-tale sign of that school's relative distance from the unitary, normative truth. This attitude towards the unicity of truth is reflected in Ibn Taymiyya's adherence, with regard to the difference of opinion (*ikhtilāf*) among legal scholars, to the maxim that "the truth is [to be found] in one [opinion]" (*al-ḥaqq fī wāḥid*), that is, while each *mujtahid* scholar may well be rewarded for his sincere effort to identify a legal ruling, only one of several conflicting solutions is actually correct in the objective sense of being *the* right answer from the perspective of God.[40] This contrasts with the more catholic—but epistemologically also more relativistic—position of the majority, predicated on the maxim that "each *mujtahid* is correct" (*kullu mujtahid muṣīb*); in other words, not merely is each of the *mujtahid*s who disagree on a point of law rewarded for his effort, but all their divers opinions are positively correct, even when they contradict one another.[41] We will see these various tendencies in Ibn Taymiyya's legal thought replicated in his approach to Qurʾānic hermeneutics and, ultimately, his approach to questions of theology and philosophy as well. Another central tenet of Ibn Taymiyya's legal thought likewise reflected in his theology is the notion that an authentic text of revelation can never conflict with a valid legal analogy (*qiyās*) based on a correct instance of *ijtihād*. In other words, there can be no conflict between revelation and reason on the plane of legal rulings just as there can be no such conflict in the realm of theology. Any apparent contradiction between reason and revelation in the legal domain is necessarily due to an unsound analogy, the use of an inauthentic text, or the misinterpretation or misapplication of an authentic one.[42]

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[34] Al-Matroudi, *Ḥanbalī School*, 32–35. Under "analogy" we may also class related principles of *ijtihād*, such as *istiḥsān* (juristic preference), *istiṣḥāb* (presumption of continuity), and *maṣlaḥa mursala* (textually unattested benefits). For more on these principles, see Hallaq, *History*, 107–115. For a treatment of the details of Ibn Taymiyya's legal methodology, see Laoust, *Contribution*, which includes an annotated translation, preceded by an extensive introductory analysis, of two of Ibn Taymiyya's most important works on legal methodology, "Maʿārij al-wuṣūl" and "al-Qiyās fī al-sharʿ al-Islāmī" (commonly known as "Risāla fī al-qiyās").

[35] For Ibn Taymiyya's views on precaution (*iḥtiyāṭ*) and pious restraint (*waraʿ*) in legal rulings and his critique of the overapplication of these principles on the part of some legal scholars, see Al-Matroudi, *Ḥanbalī School*, 103–107. Interestingly, just one generation after Ibn Taymiyya, the famous Andalusian jurist Abū Isḥāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388), likely in response to the perceived over-scrupulousness of Sufis (not Ḥanbalīs), advocated a similar moderating of *waraʿ* when applied to questions of legal derivation.

[36] Al-Matroudi, *Ḥanbalī School*, 44. Ibn Taymiyya wrote a 100-page treatise on the correctness of the principles of the Mālikī school ("Ṣiḥḥat uṣūl madhhab ahl al-Madīna," at *MF*, 20:294–396). Ibn Rushayyiq also notes that Ibn Taymiyya wrote a separate treatise on the merits (*faḍāʾil*) of the Four Imams (Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, al-Shāfiʿī, and Ibn Ḥanbal) and the virtues of each. See Ibn Rushayyiq, *Asmāʾ muʾallafāt*, 27.

[37] Al-Matroudi, *Ḥanbalī School*, 41.

[38] Ibid.

[39] See introduction, p. 7 above.

Though Ibn Taymiyya was a faithful adherent of the methodology exemplified by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, he nevertheless believed that the Ḥanbalī school, over the course of its subsequent development, had arrived at incorrect positions on certain issues. Consequently, he sought to revise such rulings on the basis of a direct engagement with the primary sources of the Sharīʿa—Qurʾān, Sunna, consensus, and analogy—and in light of the statements and general principles of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.[43] Ibn Taymiyya's intellectual independence and willingness to challenge even widely or universally held opinions within his own school—if he judged them incorrect in light of the primary sources and the principles of the school's imam—led other Ḥanbalī authorities to criticize sharply a number of his *fatwā*s.[44] As an example, we may cite the aforementioned triple divorce formula, in which Ibn Taymiyya seems to be the first Ḥanbalī (though not the first Muslim jurist altogether) to hold the position that the triple formula uttered in a single instance does not result in an irrevocable "triple" divorce. Ibn Taymiyya's stature as a scholar, however, ensured that his opinions were taken seriously, and it is of note that since his time, Ḥanbalī legal works have taken note of Ibn Taymiyya's stance on the issue of *ṭalāq* and cited the existence of *ikhtilāf* in the Ḥanbalī school over the question of the triple divorce. Several later scholars even adopted Ibn Taymiyya's conclusions on the matter.

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[40] In this regard (as in others), Ibn Taymiyya manifests a distinct affinity with the thought of Ibn Ḥazm. On the question of the unicity of truth, for instance, and whether each *mujtahid* can be considered positively correct in his *ijtihād*, see El-Tobgui, "Epistemology of Qiyas and Taʿlil," 352–353 (and pp. 340–351 for an analysis of Ibn Ḥazm's epistemology more generally).

[41] Ibn Taymiyya is listed as having penned a separate treatise on this issue as well. See Ibn Rushayyiq, *Asmāʾ muʾallafāt*, 28.

[42] Al-Matroudi, *Ḥanbalī School*, 27–30. The existence of a conflict between reason and revelation had been taken for granted in earlier jurisprudential treatises, such as the *al-Mustaṣfā min ʿilm al-uṣūl* of al-Ghazālī (a Shāfiʿī), the *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām* of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233) (a Ḥanbalī turned Shāfiʿī), and even the *Rawḍat al-nāẓir wa-junnat al-munāẓir* of Muwaffaq al-Dīn b. Qudāma (d. 620/1223) (an avowed Ḥanbalī and anti-Ashʿarī). See Laoust, *Contribution*, 11. In his treatise "Risāla fī al-qiyās," Ibn Taymiyya argues against the possibility of a real contradiction between a revealed text and a *valid* legal analogy or, for that matter, between a revealed text and the product of other tools of legal rationalism, such as *istiḥsān* (juristic preference) or *maṣlaḥa* (utility, public interest). For an overall treatment of Ibn Taymiyya's legal methodology, especially as it relates to and overlaps with his approach to theology and reason more generally, see Rapoport, "Ibn Taymiyya's Radical Legal Thought," esp. 193–199.

Regarding matters of creed, Ibn Taymiyya also looked to the first three generations (those of the Salaf) as the sole standard by which to judge correct belief, both in terms of the Salaf's substantive doctrine and in terms of their specific methods of approaching the texts and of using reason to gain a proper understanding of them. Ibn Taymiyya did not condemn *kalām*—in the sense of disciplined reasoning about theological matters—outright; rather, he distinguished between a "*kalām sunnī*" and a "*kalām bidʿī*,"[45] that is, between an orthodox and a heterodox way of reasoning about religious truths. A primary motivating factor in his opposition to *kalām* was his view that it was divisive and schismatic: schools often differed bitterly over points of doctrine owing to their differing notions of what reason was presumed to entail and, just as commonly, on account of variant starting assumptions and founding axioms determined by the overall philosophical premises of the school in question. Ibn Taymiyya's life project was, in a sense, to transcend school divisions by reuniting the Muslim religious community on a reintegrated theological platform that was based directly on the understanding and approach of the Salaf, whom he held to be, of necessity, both more correct than later theologians and, as a corollary to this, characterized by a comparatively higher degree of consensus, if not outright uniformity, in their apprehension of theological truth.

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[43] Al-Matroudi, *Ḥanbalī School*, 56–57, 189–190, and *passim*. Also Laoust, *Essai*, 77–78.

[44] On opposition to Ibn Taymiyya from his Ḥanbalī peers, see Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya *wa-Jamāʿatu-hu*," 33–36 and Bori, 37–41 for opposition to him from traditionalist (that is, non-Ashʿarī) Shāfiʿīs as well.

[45] Laoust, "L'influence," 18.

In addition to his study of theology, Ibn Taymiyya also closely scrutinized the doctrines of the philosophers—primarily with the view to refute them, but also to understand their origins. He wrote his scathing critique of Aristotelian logic, *al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn*, while imprisoned in the tower at Alexandria. He also forcefully advocated the old-style analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) of the jurists over the Aristotelian syllogism, which had become part and parcel of the "new" *kalām* through the work of al-Ghazālī. Ibn Taymiyya likewise advocated for the jurists' method of definition by description (*waṣf*) over the philosophical method of definition by genus and specific difference (known as *ḥadd*). Finally, Ibn Taymiyya was a (moderate) nominalist,[46] refusing to accord any independent ontological reality to abstract concepts or notions outside the mind.[47] These and similar matters will occupy our attention in chapter 5.

Ibn Taymiyya's own positive theology has been given the name "Qurʾānic rational theology."[48] Considering the rise and spread of a rationalistic theology that was increasingly influenced by philosophical terms and categories, Ibn Taymiyya set himself the task—reminiscent of al-Ashʿarī—of defending traditional doctrines by reformulating them within an alternative rationalist framework.[49] Deeply immersed in the intellectual legacy of Islamic civilization and intimately familiar with its sundry movements and discourses, Ibn Taymiyya, it has been noted, seems to have been "influenced by al-Ashʿarī's critique of the Muʿtazilites, al-Ghazālī's of the philosophers, and Ibn Rushd's of the Ashʿarites."[50] Ibn Taymiyya was keenly aware, and highly mistrustful, of the "Avicennian turn"[51] that had occurred in later Ashʿarī *kalām* as of al-Juwaynī and, especially, al-Ghazālī one generation later. He therefore sought to articulate an alternative theology based more squarely on the revealed texts while nevertheless fully engaging the philosophical tradition. In this respect, his approach differed substantially from past traditionalist scholars, who had clung to a strong theological textualism while deliberately eschewing any engagement with the philosophical tradition whatsoever.

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[46] This was true in some respects, but he was also a moderate realist in others, as argued by Anke von Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 306 ff.

[47] Laoust, "L'influence," 19.

[48] Özervarli, "Qurʾānic Rational Theology," 78.

[49] Ibid., 79.

[50] Ibid.

[51] See Wisnovsky, "One Aspect."

At the same time, Ibn Taymiyya was a strong proponent of the notion that revelation—in the form of the Qurʾān and the Sunna—provides comprehensive knowledge of not only the principles (*uṣūl*) but also the details (*furūʿ*) of the theological postulates upon which religion rests. Furthermore, it does so by explicitly indicating not only the premises but also the *rational methods*—backed up by the most conclusive and certain rational arguments and proofs—on the basis of which further details are to be worked out. Indeed, perhaps the most salient and ingenious feature of Ibn Taymiyya's thought and methodology is the fact that he did not banish reason in favor of an entirely non-speculative traditionalism; rather, he rehabilitated reason, all the while preserving the obvious meaning of the revealed texts by demonstrating that sound reason and authentic revelation never come into actual conflict. This is so because revelation, "all-inclusive and faultless, contains within itself perfect and complete rational foundations."[52] On the basis of this insight, Ibn Taymiyya put forth a "philosophical interpretation and defense of tradition,"[53] thereby developing his own unique brand of what has appositely been termed a "philosophical traditionalism."[54]

3 Character and Contemporary Reception

Ibn Taymiyya was a controversial figure in his own times and has remained one up to the current day. On the one hand, he was universally recognized by his contemporaries—friend and foe alike—for his extraordinary personal integrity and moral character, to say nothing of his virtually unparalleled mastery of a vast range of religious and intellectual disciplines coupled with his reputation for fastidious adherence to the teachings and practices of Islam. Indeed, while many found fault with Ibn Taymiyya's ideas, hardly anyone criticized him for his character.[55] Ibn Taymiyya was particularly admired by classical historians and biographers, so much so that

> without exception, all of the historians, no matter what their position, training, and specialization, show a distinctly favorable attitude towards Ibn Taymiyya's words and deeds. So far as has been determined, only al-D̲hahabî, Ibn Rajab, and Ibn Ḥajar record anything at all that might be

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[52] See Rapoport and Ahmed, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Times," 8.

[53] Hoover, "Perpetual Creativity," 194.

[54] Rapoport and Ahmed, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Times," 12.

[55] See Little, "Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?," 94.

> construed as an uncomplimentary interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya's character and activities, and the instances of this are rare even with these three authors.[56]

And while it is true that nearly all the Syrian scholar-historians happened to be followers or supporters of Ibn Taymiyya—drawn from the ranks of fellow Ḥanbalīs like Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī (d. 744/1344) and Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393) or of traditionalist-oriented Shāfiʿīs like al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373)—even his worst enemies conceded the overall excellence of his character and the exemplary quality of his pious and God-fearing life. For example, the Mālikī chief *qāḍī* Zayn al-Dīn b. Makhlūf (d. 718/1318), who had been behind many of Ibn Taymiyya's troubles after his arrival in Egypt, ultimately conceded that "there is no one more righteous than Ibn Taymiyya; we ought to abandon our struggle against him."[57] Furthermore, Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), who was, on the whole, highly critical of Ibn Taymiyya's ideas and who wrote several tracts attacking his doctrines, made the following almost gushing statement to al-Dhahabī:

> As for what you [al-Dhahabī] say in regard to al-Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn [Ibn Taymiyya], I am convinced of the great scope, the ocean-like fullness and vastness of his knowledge of the transmitted and intellectual sciences, his extreme intelligence, his exertions and his attainments, all of which surpass description. I have always held this opinion. Personally, my admiration is even greater for the asceticism, piety, and religiosity with which God has endowed him, for his selfless championship of the truth, his adherence to the path of our forebears, his pursuit of perfection, and the wonder of his example, unrivalled in our time and in times past.[58]

In addition to such an adulatory character assessment from even his sworn opponents, Ibn Taymiyya was also highly reputed for his constant concern for others (particularly society's less fortunate), his self-sacrifice, his clemency, his courage in the face of existential danger (such as the invasion of the Mongols), and his magnanimity—even when in a position to exact reprisals—towards all who had ever occasioned him harm or borne him malice.

Notwithstanding this overall laudatory appraisal, it appears to be a matter of consensus—even among those who were generally supportive of Ibn

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[56] Little, "Historical and Historiographical Significance," 319.

[57] Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, *ʿUqūd*, 221. (Trans. Little, "Screw Loose?," 99.)

[58] Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 1:186. (Trans. Little, "Screw Loose?," 100.)

Taymiyya, such as al-Dhahabī—that he had an irascible temper[59] and an abrasive personality, that he could be overweening, and that he was often condescending towards his fellow scholars, tactless, sanctimoniously convinced of the truth of his own views, and dismissive of those who differed with him. A number of sources suggest that it was primarily Ibn Taymiyya's cantankerousness, penchant for criticism, and perpetual tendency to raise a public ruckus that guaranteed the unyielding, and often vicious, opposition of his detractors. Certainly, some of Ibn Taymiyya's positions—idiosyncratic and sometimes directly opposed to broadly-held views on certain theological or legal questions—would have sufficed on their own to ensure no shortage of animated and contentious exchanges between him and others. However, his grating and obstreperous manner seems to have made it that much easier for Ibn Taymiyya's antagonists to go after him with such ferocity.

Furthermore, while Ibn Taymiyya was beloved among the populace and certainly enjoyed the respect and admiration of some contemporary scholars and important statesmen and other public officials, he was by no means welcomed with open arms even by many of his fellow Ḥanbalīs. Some fellow traditionalists took exception to the important role he accorded to reason in understanding and interpreting revealed truths,[60] while many objected to his idiosyncratic legal opinions, in which he broke ranks, both methodologically and substantively, with accepted Ḥanbalī doctrine and practice. His close disciples numbered only around twelve and are conspicuous for including members of different legal schools (including a number of Shāfiʿīs and at least one Mālikī).[61] This fact demonstrates how Ibn Taymiyya, and those who were attracted to him, saw his methodology as transcending that of the established schools of law and theology and harking back to what they deemed to be the idyllically unified understanding of the pristine early community, that of the Salaf. Ibn Taymiyya's approach is built on the interrelated premises that such a unified and unequivocal understanding (1) had existed among the Salaf, (2) was identifiable, and thus (3) could be retrieved and objectively established as a true representation of the Salaf's positions. This could be done by following the methods that Ibn Taymiyya held were alone capable of identifying and laying these positions bare (methods that we examine in detail in chapters 4 and 5).

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[59] The following—admittedly humorous—anecdote, related from al-Dhahabī, makes this point especially clear: "When Ibn Taymiyya was a little boy, studying with the Banū Munajjā, they supported something that he denied, whereupon they produced the text. When he had read it, he threw it down in fury. They said, 'How bold you are to cast from your hand a volume that contains knowledge!' He quickly replied, 'Who is better, Moses or I?' 'Moses,' they said. 'And which is better, this book or the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed?' 'The tablets,' they replied. Ibn Taymiyya said, in words to this effect, 'Well, when Moses became angry, he threw down the tablets!'" Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, 7:12. (Trans. Little, "Screw Loose?," 106.)

[60] Al-Dhahabī, an anti-Ashʿarī Shāfiʿī who was largely committed to a traditionalist, non-speculative approach to the revealed texts, commented that Ibn Taymiyya "repeatedly swallowed the poison of the philosophers and their works; the body becomes addicted to the frequent use of poison so that it is secreted, by God, in the very bones." Little, "Screw Loose?," 101. Laoust, however, cast doubt on the authenticity of this quotation. See Laoust, *Essai*, 484.

[61] For a detailed discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's "inner circle," see Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya *wa-Jamāʿatu-hu*."

A corollary of Ibn Taymiyya's approach—unsettling to many of his contemporaries—was that the existing legal and theological schools did not necessarily, either individually or collectively, coincide with the verifiably authentic views of the Salaf and, by extension, of the Prophet himself. Indeed, as we have noted, Ibn Taymiyya favored the Ḥanbalī school, both in legal and theological terms, because he believed that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal had remained truest to the early ways of the Salaf. But as we have also seen, Ibn Taymiyya was not shy to critique later positions of the Ḥanbalī school when he judged that they had deviated from Aḥmad's (and therefore the Salaf's) original understanding and method. Yet by Ibn Taymiyya's time, the older, more open rivalry among the various legal schools was in abeyance, and the more catholic tendency by which each school recognized the validity of the others had gained general acceptance. This tendency was perhaps aided, in the particular social and political context of the late seventh-/thirteenth- and early eighth-/fourteenth-century Mamluk state, by the political decision to recognize all four legal schools as equally valid and to appoint four chief judges in Cairo, one from each school.[62] In light of this move towards a mutual recognition of different, officially sanctioned doctrines associated with the different legal schools, Ibn Taymiyya's supporters at the Damascus trials of 705/1306 urged him to agree to define the theological stance expounded in his *al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya* as the "Ḥanbalī" position, a position that could then exist in harmony with and mutual recognition of the predominantly Ashʿarī theology of his opponents. Ibn Taymiyya, however, flatly refused to countenance such a move. On the contrary, he insisted that "his was the view not of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, but of the Prophet himself," which "left his adversaries with only two choices: convert to his doctrine or destroy him."[63]

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[62] On the various factors motivating this move on the part of Egypt's Mamluk authorities, see Rapoport, "Legal Diversity in the Age of *Taqlīd*."

[63] Jackson, "Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial," 56.

The foregoing considerations, coupled with the fact that Ibn Taymiyya's close disciples were drawn from various schools of law, reinforce the view that what was primarily at stake was a struggle between new-style Ashʿarī *kalām* and old-school theological traditionalism.[64] This struggle took place not only across *madhhab* lines but within the various legal schools as well—particularly the Shāfiʿī school, from whose ranks most contemporary Ashʿarīs hailed but which nevertheless retained a significant number of scholars who continued to resist Ashʿarī *kalām* in favor of an old-style, non-speculative theological traditionalism. We have also seen that certain high-profile Ḥanbalīs—such as Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119), Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), and Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 716/1316)—were likewise partial to rationalist *kalām* theology of the Ashʿarī type, but these figures were much more of an exception in the midst of a Ḥanbalī school whose members, in their vast majority, had long maintained a staunch allegiance to a thoroughly textualist, non-speculative theology. It is important to remember, however, that Ibn Taymiyya was opposed not only by contemporary rationalistically inclined Ashʿarīs, on account of their belief that his "literalist" theology directly entailed anthropomorphism, but also, and certainly no less significantly, by a number of traditionalists themselves. Such traditionalists faulted him precisely for what they judged to be his *over-reliance* on reason and philosophical method in establishing theological truths. They also faulted him, more generally, for what they considered his blurring of the lines—dare one say *à la* Ashʿarī?—between the boundaries and methods of the revelation-based (*naqlī*) and the rational (*ʿaqlī*) sciences.[65] Indeed, this combination of traditionalism and rationalism has been identified as "perhaps the most distinctive trait of Ibn Taymiyya's religious thought."[66]

4 Ibn Taymiyya's Works

An eighth-/fourteenth-century work entitled *Asmāʾ muʾallafāt Ibn Taymiyya*, written by Ibn Taymiyya's personal scribe, Ibn Rushayyiq (d. 749/1349), reveals that Ibn Taymiyya was an extremely prolific writer who penned several hundred works spanning hundreds of volumes.[67] Ibn Taymiyya's student, Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, reported that his teacher had a gift for composing quickly and that he often wrote from memory without needing to cite from written materials—a major reason he was able to remain so productive even while in prison. Ibn Taymiyya, according to Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, could write a short volume (*mujallad laṭīf*) in a single day and up to forty folios (or eighty pages) in a single sitting. On at least one occasion, he is reported to have composed an answer to an exceedingly difficult question (*min ashkal al-mashākil*) in eight quires (128 pages),[68] likewise in a single session![69] The ninth-/fifteenth-century chronicler Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī (d. 842/1438) reported Ibn Taymiyya's contemporary Abū al-Muẓaffar al-Surramarrī (d. 776/1374) as saying, "Among the wonders of our time is the memory (*ḥifẓ*) of Ibn Taymiyya: he used to read a book once and it would be etched in his memory such that he would quote it verbatim in his own writings [from memory, it is implied]."[70]

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[64] Ibid., 48 (also citing George Makdisi to the same effect).

[65] Özervarli, "Qurʾānic Rational Theology," 80.

[66] Rapoport and Ahmed, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Times," 8.

[67] Several printed versions of *Asmāʾ muʾallafāt* incorrectly ascribe the work to Ibn Taymiyya's famous disciple, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. The actual compiler, however, was Ibn Taymiyya's scribe (*kātib*), Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Rushayyiq. Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī reports in

In terms of style, Ibn Taymiyya's prose is clear, precise, and easy to read; he was by no means given to the use of highly ornate or stylized language. Like his personality, his theology, and his lifestyle, Ibn Taymiyya's writing is down to earth, pragmatic, and to the point. Though he often deals with themes of extraordinary complexity (particularly in a work as philosophically involved as the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*), it is nevertheless clear that his intention was to write in a manner accessible to the average man and not just the scholarly elite. The only occasions on which he incorporates slight embellishments of style into his writing are his intermittent use of *sajʿ* (rhymed prose) to mark the transition from one topic to another or as a means of emphasis. Notwithstanding the limpidity of his language, Ibn Taymiyya's works are nonetheless characterized by a high degree of repetition, excursiveness, and a penchant for tangents. Some digressions in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, for instance, go on for tens of pages, while others run on for more than a hundred. Some modern scholars have described Ibn Taymiyya's writing style as a "characteristically digressive, disjointed style that bears the marks of brilliant insights hastily jotted down."[71] Other scholars have blamed the relative dearth of serious studies of Ibn Taymiyya's sophisticated philosophical and theological thought on

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his *ʿUqūd* that Ibn Rushayyiq was one of the closest personal associates of Ibn Taymiyya (*min akhaṣṣ aṣḥāb shaykhinā*) and the most keen on collecting his writings. On Ibn Rushayyiq, see al-Ḥujaylī, *Manhaj*.

[68] A quire (*kurrās*[*a*], pl. *karārīs*) was most often formed of four folded sheets of paper, yielding eight leaves/folios (*waraqāt*)—or sixteen total sides (*wujūh*), or pages.

[69] Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, *ʿUqūd*, 72.

[70] Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, *al-Radd al-wāfir*, 218.

[71] Rapoport and Ahmed, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Times," 4.

his “disorganized writing style, length, verbosity, and propensity for digression and repetition”[72]—all features that are prominent in the *Darʾ* and that go a long way towards accounting for the difficulty and unwieldiness of the text.

Here we mention briefly those of Ibn Taymiyya’s works that are most relevant to the topic of reason and revelation. Pertinent writings on exegesis and its principles include the following: *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr* (*Introduction to the Principles of Tafsīr*);[73] a full-volume commentary on the phrase “and none knows its *taʾwīl* save God”;[74] a treatise on the phrase “in it [the Qurʾān] are *muḥkam* verses”;[75] a treatise on the phrase “a Book whose verses have been made firm (*uḥkimat*)”;[76] and a fifty-leaf treatise on the all-important verse “There is none like unto Him.”[77] Also important for Ibn Taymiyya’s understanding of language and interpretation is an eighty-leaf treatise on the terms “literal” (*ḥaqīqa*) and “figurative” (*majāz*).[78]

Regarding works on theological topics (*uṣūl al-dīn*), *Asmāʾ muʾallafāt* lists 165 separate writings of various lengths and genres, the most famous of which are *Kitāb al-Īmān* (*Book of Faith*); *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*; *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya fī taʾsīs bidaʿihim al-kalāmiyya* (Elucidating the deceit of the Jahmiyya in laying the bases of their theological innovations); *Kitāb Minhāj al-sunna* (The way of the Sunna), in refutation of Shīʿism; the seven-volume *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ* (The correct response to those who altered the religion of the Messiah), in refutation of Christian trinitarian theology;[79] and the work *Iqtiḍāʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm*[80] (On the obligation of remaining distinct from the people of the fire),[81] on the various excesses of popular religion against which Ibn Taymiyya regularly inveighed. Other comprehensive theological works include a full volume explicating the first part of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's famous theological work *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-mutaʾakhkhirīn* and a two-volume commentary on certain questions treated in al-Rāzī's *al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*.[82] Shorter theological treatises of a general nature include the aforementioned *al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya*[83] and *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya*, as well as *al-Risāla al-Tadmuriyya*,[84] *al-Qāʿida al-Murrākushiyya* (on the question of the divine attributes), and a fifty-leaf treatise on the creed of the Ashʿarīs, the Māturīdīs, and the non-Māturīdī Ḥanafīs.[85]

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[72] Özervarli, “Qurʾānic Rational Theology,” 96. In a complementary vein, Birgit Krawietz remarks that “[Ibn Taymiyya] selbst verwandte jedoch keine Sorgfalt auf die Vorstrukturierung seines Nachruhms durch systematische Präsentation, gefällige Aufbereitung oder sorgfältige Sichtung seiner bereits abgefaßten Schriften” ([Ibn Taymiyya] himself, however, took no care to structure his posthumous reputation in advance through systematic presentation, appealing preparation, or the careful sifting of his already drafted writings). Krawietz, “Ibn Taymiyya,” 55.

[73] Available with commentary by Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn, translated into English as *An Explanation of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah’s Introduction to the Principles of Tafsir*. For a detailed study of this work, including its implications for and effect upon the larger *tafsīr* tradition, see Saleh, “Ibn Taymiyya and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics.” A collation of the various works Ibn Taymiyya wrote on *tafsīr* reveals that, all in all, he composed the equivalent of about seventy quires (1,120 pages) of *tafsīr*. Al-Ḥujaylī, *Manhaj*. Ibn Taymiyya’s writings in *tafsīr* are now available as a single multi-volume collection, published in al-Qaysī, *Tafsīr Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya* (7 vols). The introduction to this work states that these seven volumes contain all Ibn Taymiyya’s known writings on *tafsīr*, going substantially beyond what is found in *MF*. See al-Qaysī, *Tafsīr Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*, 15 ff.

[74] Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:7. *MF*, 13:270–313. (Also discussed at *MF*, 5:477–482.)

[75] Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:7. Discussed at *MF*, 13:143–148.

[76] Q. *Hūd* 11:1. *MF*, 15:106–108.

[77] Q. *al-Shūrā* 42:11. *MF*, 6:513–529.

[78] Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Ḥaqīqa wa-l-majāz* (also at *MF*, 20:400–497). The separate treatise *al-Risāla al-Madaniyya* (which also appears at *MF*, 6:351–373) is also relevant.

Works dealing with the all-important question of God's names and attributes include, in addition to the abovementioned *Murrākushiyya*, the following tracts: a treatise on the Most Beautiful Names of God (*asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*), as well as a treatise on the affirmation (*ithbāt*) of God's names and attributes;[86] a fifty-leaf *fatwā* on the issue of God's being above (*ʿuluww*);[87] a treatise known as the *Irbīliyya* on the question of God's settling (*istiwāʾ*) and descending (*nuzūl*) and whether these are meant to be taken literally

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[79] For a study on and partial translation of *Jawāb*, see Michel, *Muslim Theologian's Response*. This work has also been taken up in Roberts, "Reopening of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue." See also Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya," 834–844, which provides a detailed discussion of the content and significance of *Jawāb*, as well as an exhaustive list of all extant manuscripts, editions and translations, and scholarly studies.

[80] For a description and full bibliography, see Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya," 865–873.

[81] Literally, "On the requirement of the Straight Path [i.e., Islam] to remain distinct from the people of the fire." Trans. Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle against Popular Religion*.

[82] Neither of which is known to be extant.

[83] Trans. Swartz, "Seventh-Century (A.H.) Sunnī Creed."

[84] Also at *MF*, 3:1–128. This treatise has formed the object of a lengthy refutation by the contemporary Palestinian-Jordanian scholar Saʿīd Fūda, entitled *Naqḍ al-Risāla al-Tadmuriyya*.

[85] Treatise not identified.

[86] Material related to the Most Beautiful Names and to the affirmation of the divine names and attributes can be found at *MF*, 5:153–193 and in *al-Risāla al-Madaniyya*.

[87] In *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʾil*, 185–216.

(*ḥaqīqatan*);[88] a further, twenty-page treatise on *istiwāʾ* and a refutation of its interpretation as "dominion" or "overpowering" (*istīlāʾ*);[89] and a forty-leaf treatise on God's distinction and separateness (*mubāyana*) from creation.[90]

Other treatises touch upon questions of epistemology or rational methods of argumentation. These include the following: a 100-leaf *qāʿida* (treatise) on the notion that every rational argument adduced by an innovator (*mubtadiʿ*) proves the invalidity of his position;[91] a full-volume work on knowledge that is firmly established (*al-ʿilm al-muḥkam*); a three-volume work refuting the position that definitive (scriptural) indicants (*adilla qaṭʿiyya*) do not yield certainty (*yaqīn*);[92] a treatise on the superiority of the knowledge of the early community (the *salaf*) over those who succeeded them (the *khalaf*); and a treatise on the perceived contradiction between the texts of revelation and consensus (*ijmāʿ*).[93]

Works on purely philosophical themes include the following: a refutation of Ibn Sīnā's *al-Aḍḥawiyya fī al-maʿād*, which denies physical resurrection after death[94] (one of many extensive philosophical discursions found throughout the *Darʾ*); a thin volume on the "*tawḥīd*" of the philosophers following in the way of Ibn Sīnā; a work entitled *al-Radd ʿalā falsafat Ibn Rushd*; a short volume on universals; a "large volume" refuting the philosophers' assertion of the eternity of the world; and, finally, the aforementioned all-out attack on Greek logic, *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn*.

Finally, we must mention several important compendia of Ibn Taymiyya's writings. The largest and most significant of these are *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil al-kubrā* (2 vols.), *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʾil* (5 vols.), the 37-volume *Majmūʿ fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*, and, now, the seven-volume *Tafsīr Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*. These works bring together a number of shorter works—and some lengthier ones[95]—on various topics; as such, they form an indispensable resource for the researcher interested in exploring Ibn Taymiyya's rich thought and his voluminous writings.

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[88] Perhaps *MF*, 5:194–225 (though I have not been able to find any discrete treatise by this name). For this theme in general, see *MF*, vol. 5 ("al-Asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt I"), *passim*.

[89] Al-Bazzār reports that Ibn Taymiyya composed the equivalent of thirty-five quires (560 pages) on the question of *istiwāʾ* (al-Ḥujaylī, *Manhaj*). (Treatise not identified.)

[90] *MF*, 5:310–320.

[91] Possibly *MF*, 4:46–97.

[92] Listed in al-Ḥujaylī, *Manhaj*, on the authority of al-Ṣafadī and Ibn Shākir (d. 764/1363). (Treatise not identified.)

[93] Ibn Taymiyya, "Risāla fī al-qiyās." For a useful summary and analysis of this work, as well as a comparison of Ibn Taymiyya's application of the principle of non-contradiction between reason and revelation in both the legal and the theological domains, see Rapoport, "Ibn Taymiyya's Radical Legal Thought," 192–199.

[94] At Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ*, 5:10–87. For a detailed study and a translation of Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of the *Aḍḥawiyya* in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, see Michot, "Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary."

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5 The Historiography of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*: Ibn Taymiyya's Assessment of the Intellectual Legacy He Inherited

In chapter 1, we considered the various currents and crosscurrents of the Islamic intellectual tradition, with special emphasis on the question of the relationship between reason and revelation as it developed in various disciplines up to the time of Ibn Taymiyya in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century. The preceding section of this chapter complemented that survey by providing an aperçu of Ibn Taymiyya's immediate political and social circumstances, the fundamental elements of his biography, and the main outlines of his intellectual profile and scholarly output. Yet, we must take one final step in order to understand with precision what motivated Ibn Taymiyya in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, in what context *he* perceived the momentous struggle of reason and revelation, and what precisely he hoped to achieve through his monumental magnum opus. This step involves reconstructing, from various statements scattered throughout the *Darʾ*, Ibn Taymiyya's assessment of the development of the intellectual tradition he inherited and with which he brought himself into such urgent and strident conversation. Once we have understood Ibn Taymiyya's perspective on the fundamental issues at stake, as can be gleaned from his own words, we can then delve into the *Darʾ* in the next chapter and begin to unravel the project to which its author has dedicated it.

We recall the fundamental issue of the divine attributes and the question of how best to understand scriptural statements that affirm the completely unique, other, and incomparable nature of God while simultaneously describing Him in terms evocative of qualities and attributes partaken of by human beings. The necessity of affirming God's radical dissimilarity (*tanzīh*) to anything created had to be counterbalanced by the imperative to uphold and affirm (*ithbāt*) the language of scripture and the reality of the descriptions God gives of Himself therein. We have seen that, over the course of Islamic history, different schools of thought adopted varying positions on how best to effect this reconciliation, with some stressing the reality of the attributes to the point of falling into a crude and primitive assimilationism (*tashbīh*), while others insisted upon divine transcendence with such single-mindedness as to deny the attributes any reality whatsoever, nullifying them altogether (*taʿṭīl*) and reducing the word "God" to an empty signifier denoting an abstract entity entirely inconceivable to the human mind (and, hence, unapproachable to the human heart as well).

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[95] Such as *Kitāb al-Īmān*, which occupies all of *MF*, vol. 7 (comprising a total of 686 pages). For a discussion of this work, see Belhaj, *Questions théologiques*, 89–98.

We begin our mapping of Ibn Taymiyya's mindset by considering his understanding of the positions pertaining to the divine attributes upheld by the early community of the Salaf (roughly, the learned men and women of the first three generations of Muslims), whom Ibn Taymiyya takes to be uniquely authoritative in their understanding and practice of the religion. The goal of this section is not to offer an independent assessment of Ibn Taymiyya's depiction of the issues at hand but only to present his understanding of them in order to allow us, in the remainder of this study, to appreciate his response to the intellectual situation he encountered in the late seventh/thirteenth and early eighth/fourteenth centuries.

We begin with the earliest period, that of the Salaf. With respect to this early authoritative community, Ibn Taymiyya contends the following: (1) that the Salaf were unanimous in their affirmation of *all* the attributes predicated of God in revelation in a manner consistent with a straightforward, plain-sense understanding of the revealed texts, that is, without making *taʾwīl* or *tafwīḍ* of any of the divine attributes (in other words, he maintains that the Salaf were full-fledged affirmationists [*muthbitūn*] with no indications from them of any form of negationism [*nafy*] or figurative reinterpretation [*taʾwīl*]—which amounts to negationism for Ibn Taymiyya);[96] (2) that they were also unanimous in denouncing negationist positions once these started to arise with or around the time of Jahm b. Ṣafwān and his teacher, al-Jaʿd b. Dirham, in the late first/seventh and early second/eighth centuries; and, critically for Ibn Taymiyya's project, (3) that they actively defended and promoted affirmationist stances, and denounced negationist ones, by means of rational argumentation (in additional to citing purely scriptural evidence). This last point is key, for even the negationist admits, as a rule, that the obvious sense of the texts seems to imply affirmationism; hence his effort to reinterpret (that is, to make *taʾwīl* of) the text according to the demands of reason or, at the very least, to point out that the obvious meaning cannot have been intended based on the presence of a rational objection (*muʿāriḍ ʿaqlī*). In the face of such a stance, merely citing scripture is of no avail, for both the negationist and the affirmationist are, in fact, in agreement about what the obvious sense of the texts implies. The negationist's "rational objection" to the apparent sense of revelation can thus be adequately met only by rational arguments refuting this objection and demonstrating the reasonability of the plain sense of the text in question. Ibn Taymiyya is keen to establish that the Salaf, whose positions and methods he takes as uniquely normative, were in possession both of a sound (indeed, the soundest) understanding of the revealed texts and of robust and evincive (indeed, the most robust and evincive) methods of rational argumentation in defense of this understanding. They thus stood at the very top of the Taymiyyan pyramid,[97] in perfect and harmonious conformity with both authentic revelation and sound reason.[98]

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[96] See, for instance, Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ*, 4:23, line 16 to 4:24, line 7.

But how, according to Ibn Taymiyya, did we get from this situation to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's articulation of the universal rule six centuries later? Much like modern historians of Islamic intellectual history, Ibn Taymiyya, relying largely on al-Shahrastānī's *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-niḥal* as well as al-Ashʿarī's *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, dates the spread of negationist (*jahmī*)[99] positions to the period "after the first century [of the *hijra*], towards the end of the generation of the Successors."[100] This is the period when the proto-Muʿtazila[101] took the position that neither accidents (*aʿrāḍ*) nor temporally originating events (*ḥawādith*) could supervene in God (*taḥullu bihi*). By this, Ibn Taymiyya reports, they meant that there could not subsist in God (*taqūmu bihi*) any attribute (*ṣifa*), such as "knowledge" or "power," or any action (*fiʿl*) or state (*ḥāl*), such as "creating" or "settling" (*istiwāʾ*, i.e., upon the throne). Prior to this period, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, there are no statements or positions of negationism regarding the divine attributes that are recorded or known of anyone among the Muslim community, nor are there any statements denying that acts or states contingent upon God's will inhere in the divine essence.[102] Once such a position arose and was championed by the Muʿtazila, however, the authoritative scholars of the early community (*aʾimmat al-salaf*) promptly denounced it, "as is known and reported of them in a *mutawātir* fashion."[103] This initial denial of the divine attributes and actions led the Muʿtazila to adopt the position of the createdness of the Qurʾān, on the grounds that if the Qurʾān were held to subsist in God's essence (*law qāma bi-dhātihi*), then this would entail that there could, in fact, subsist in Him actions and attributes, a position that had been denied at the outset. Ibn Taymiyya reports that the Salaf and early authorities (*al-salaf wa-l-aʾimma*) were likewise unanimous in denouncing this position too.[104]

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[97] See p. 7 above.

[98] Ibn Taymiyya seems to have stressed the early community's expertise in and regular recourse to rational argumentation in defense of the rational plausibility of scriptural dicta as a response to later thinkers (such as al-Rāzī and others), who contended that the Salaf were too preoccupied with establishing and expanding the frontiers of the Islamic lands and setting up its basic institutions to concern themselves with a careful reflection upon, and a rationally mature understanding of, the texts of revelation.

[99] See *Darʾ*, 7:72, line 21 to 7:73, line 1, where Ibn Taymiyya speaks of the foreign origins of negationism (*tajahhum*) and how it was adopted from past atheist nations (*malāḥidat al-umam al-munkirīna lil-Ṣāniʿ*), whom Ibn Taymiyya brands "the most ignorant of sects and the least endowed with intellect." It is not clear whether by "past atheist nations" Ibn Taymiyya is referring to the Greeks or, more likely, to the "materialists" (*dahriyya*) or the (possibly Buddhist) Sumaniyya of Tirmidh and Samarqand briefly encountered in the previous chapter (see above, p. 32).

[100] *Darʾ*, 4:24, lines 9–10.

[101] Such as al-Jaʿd b. Dirham, Jahm b. Ṣafwān, and others (on whom see above, p. 35 ff.).

Now, explains Ibn Taymiyya, all those who opposed the Muʿtazila on this count initially upheld the subsistence in God of attributes and of actions and speech contingent upon His will until the time of Ibn Kullāb (d. ca. 241/855)[105] and his followers, who introduced a distinction between God's "essential attributes" and His "volitional attributes." Essential attributes, such as life and knowledge, are intrinsic to the divine essence. Volitional attributes, on the other hand, are contingent upon God's will and power. Consequently, volitional attributes cannot be said to "subsist" in God, as this would entail the supervening of a succession of temporally originating events (*taʿāqub al-ḥawādith*) within the divine being—an impossibility according to Ibn Kullāb's doctrine. Ibn Kullāb was then succeeded by Muḥammad b. Karrām (d. 255/869). Ibn Taymiyya reports on the authority of al-Ashʿarī's *Maqālāt* that Ibn Karrām, along with "the majority of Muslims (*ahl al-qibla*) before him—including various factions of *mutakallimūn* from the Shīʿa and the Murjiʾa, such as the Hishāmiyya, and the disciples of Abū Muʿādh al-Tūmanī and Zuhayr al-Atharī and others"[106]—was opposed both to the Muʿtazila and to the followers of Ibn Kullāb. All such groups, Ibn Taymiyya affirms, held the position that temporally originating events could subsist in God,[107] and some among them even held the explicit position that God could move and that He has been "speaking from eternity whenever He willed."[108]

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[102] "*al-umūr al-ikhtiyāriyya al-qāʾima bi-dhātihi.*" *Darʾ*, 4:24, line 11 and 8:286, line 13. See similar discussion at *Darʾ*, 2:173, 6:321, 9:189, 9:248, and 9:312.

[103] See *Darʾ*, 4:24, lines 14–15. The word *mutawātir*, a technical term primarily used in the sciences of jurisprudence and *ḥadīth*, refers to any report that is "highly recurrent" or "mass transmitted" (and on every level of transmission, including the very first) by such a large number of disparate individuals as to preclude their collusion upon the forgery of said report. For a discussion of the centrality of the concept of *tawātur* not only to *ḥadīth* but to Islamic conceptions of epistemology more generally, see Weiss, "Knowledge of the Past." See also Hallaq, "On Inductive Corroboration," esp. 9–24. On *tawātur* in Ibn Taymiyya specifically, see El-Tobgui, "From Legal Theory to *Erkenntnistheorie*."

[104] *Darʾ*, 4:24, lines 16–18.

[105] On whom see esp. p. 48 ff. above.

The next generation saw the rise of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935 or 936), whom Ibn Taymiyya credits with having launched a major effort to shore up the early community's normative understanding of the revealed texts concerning God's attributes and actions. It is noteworthy that one is hard pressed to find a single critical, let alone pejorative, statement about al-Ashʿarī in ten volumes of text. Rather, Ibn Taymiyya lauds al-Ashʿarī generously and commends him for his efforts to defend the received doctrine of the early community in rational terms. He classifies al-Ashʿarī, for instance, as "one of the astute of the *mutakallimūn*" (*min hudhdhāq ahl al-kalām*) for conceding that the argument for the creation of the world from the temporal origination of accidents (*ḥudūth al-aʿrāḍ*) is not the method employed by revelation or by the early community and authoritative scholars (*salaf al-umma wa-aʾimmatuhā*).[109] He further praises al-Ashʿarī and his immediate followers (*aṣḥābuhu*) for their affiliation with (the doctrine of) Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and "leading authorities of the Sunna like him."[110] Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya affirms, al-Ashʿarī was "closer to the doctrine (*madhhab*) of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and *ahl al-sunna* than many of the later figures affiliated with Aḥmad [i.e., latter-day Ḥanbalīs] who inclined to some [aspects] of Muʿtazilī *kalām*, [figures] such as Ibn ʿAqīl, Ṣadaqa b. al-Ḥusayn [d. 573/1177], Ibn al-Jawzī, and others like them."[111] Ibn Taymiyya also held the view that the doctrine of al-Ashʿarī and his immediate followers on the divine attributes in particular was closer to the (orthodox) position of *ahl al-sunna* and the people of *ḥadīth* than the doctrine of Ibn Ḥazm and the Ẓāhirīs was.[112] Finally, Ibn Taymiyya cites approvingly the text of a letter by Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) called *Fī faḍāʾil al-Ashʿarī* (On the virtues of al-Ashʿarī), which al-Bayhaqī "wrote to one of the governors of

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[106] See *Darʾ*, 4:25, lines 7–10.

[107] "*kānū yaqūlūna bi-qiyām al-ḥawādith bihi.*" *Darʾ*, 4:25, line 11.

[108] "*lam yazal mutakalliman idhā shāʾ.*" *Darʾ*, 4:25, line 13. My translation of this expression follows Hoover, "God Acts by His Will and Power," 58. For a detailed history and explication of the nuances of the term *lam yazal* as used in Islamic theological discourse, see Frank, "'Lam yazal' as a Formal Term in Muslim Theological Discourse."

[109] See *Darʾ*, 1:39, lines 6–9.

[110] *Darʾ*, 1:270, lines 8–9.

[111] *Darʾ*, 1:270, lines 9–11.

[112] *Darʾ*, 5:250, lines 7–9.

Khurasan when people began cursing the innovators (*ahl al-bidaʿ*) there and some wanted to include al-Ashʿarī among them."[113]

Despite such generous commendation, Ibn Taymiyya nonetheless ascribes to al-Ashʿarī two specific shortcomings that, while subtle and therefore easily overlooked in al-Ashʿarī's own doctrine, planted the seeds for an eventual excrescence of major problems in the centuries that followed. The first shortcoming concerns al-Ashʿarī's knowledge of the details of the Sunna. Although Ibn Taymiyya goes so far as to consider al-Ashʿarī and "the likes of him," such as Ibn Kullāb, to be among the "*mutakallimat ahl al-ḥadīth*" (*ḥadīth* folk specialized in *kalām*) and "the best among the various factions and closest to the Book and the Sunna,"[114] he nevertheless maintains that while al-Ashʿarī possessed detailed expertise in *kalām*, his knowledge of the particulars of the *ḥadīth* and Sunna (as is typical, he tells us, of those specialized primarily in rational theology) was much more general and, ultimately, insufficient for him always to know precisely what the early positions of the Salaf were that needed to be defended.[115] Ibn Taymiyya speaks of how al-Ashʿarī and his main (early) followers (*aʾimmat atbāʿihi*), such as al-Bāqillānī and Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī,

> wanted to champion the well-known positions of the people of Sunna and *ḥadīth* (*ahl al-sunna wa-l-ḥadīth*) while at the same time concurring with the negationists (*jahmiyya*) on [certain] rational principles that they deemed to be valid, and [since] they did not have the detailed expertise in the Qurʾān and its meanings, as well as in *ḥadīth* and the positions of the Companions, that the leading scholars of Sunna and *ḥadīth* had, they formed a doctrine (*madhhab*) that was a composite of these two [approaches], with the result that both parties [i.e., the negationists and the people of *ḥadīth*] accused them of contradiction.[116]

In another passage, Ibn Taymiyya remarks that the foremost authors (*aʿyān al-fuḍalāʾ al-muṣannifīn*) [i.e., on creed], such as al-Shahrastānī, Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148), al-Juwaynī, al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā (d. 458/1066), Ibn al-Zāghūnī (d. 527/1132), Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, Muḥammad b. al-Hayṣam (d. 407[?]/1016 or 1017), and others

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[113] *Darʾ*, 7:98–99. See excerpt from al-Bayhaqī's *Risāla* at *Darʾ*, 7:99, line 3 to 7:101, line 8.

[114] *Darʾ*, 7:462, lines 5–6. See also *Darʾ*, 2:308, lines 8–10, where Ibn Taymiyya states that "since al-Ashʿarī and those like him were closer to the Sunna than [other] factions of *mutakallimūn*, he is closer in affiliation (*intisāb*) to Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal] than are others, as is evident in his works." (See index of Arabic passages.)

[115] See *Darʾ*, 7:35–36.

[116] *Darʾ*, 7:35, lines 14–19. (See index of Arabic passages.)

> often mention many positions on an issue taken by various groups, yet they neither know nor cite the established position of the early community (*salaf*) and of authorities (*aʾimma*) such as Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal], even though the generality of scholars affiliated with the Sunna/Sunnism (*ʿāmmat al-muntasibīna ilā al-sunna*) from all the various factions (*ṭawāʾif*) claim to follow the authoritative imams such as Mālik, al-Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Ibn al-Mubārak, Ḥammād b. Zayd, and others.[117]

Reminiscent of a comment made by Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī with respect to his teacher, al-Ghazālī,[118] Ibn Taymiyya maintains that al-Ashʿarī spent so many years immersed in Muʿtazilī thought that he was unable to extricate himself from it fully. As a result, he unwittingly retained in his own doctrine what Ibn Taymiyya calls "remnants of the principles of the Muʿtazila."[119] Such "remnants" include, for instance, al-Ashʿarī's (and Ibn Kullāb's) concession of the validity of the argument for the existence of God from accidents (*ṭarīqat al-aʿrāḍ*) and the argument from the composition of bodies (*ṭarīqat al-tarkīb*)[120]—topics that, Ibn Taymiyya concedes, are "difficult even for those with more knowledge of the *ḥadīth* and Sunna than al-Ashʿarī had."[121] In another passage, Ibn Taymiyya speaks of "remnants of *iʿtizāl*" in al-Ashʿarī, al-Qalānisī, and "those like them." This time, he mentions the argument from motion (*ṭarīqat al-ḥarakāt*), an argument that, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, al-Ashʿarī himself admits (in his *Risāla ilā ahl al-thaghr*) was an innovation in prophetic religion (*ṭarīq mubtadaʿ fī dīn al-rusul*) and prohibited in it (*muḥarram ʿindahum* [i.e., *al-rusul*]).[122] "This principle," Ibn Taymiyya concludes, "is what landed the Muʿtazila in the denial of [God's] attributes and actions."[123]

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[117] See *Darʾ*, 2:307, line 12 to 2:308, line 2. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[118] See *Darʾ*, 1:5, lines 9–10, where Ibn Taymiyya quotes Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī as saying, "Our shaykh [al-Ghazālī] penetrated into the inner reaches of philosophy [lit. "inside the philosophers" (*buṭūn al-falāsifa*)] then wanted to come back out, but he was not able to."

[119] "*baqāyā min uṣūl al-Muʿtazila.*" *Darʾ*, 7:462, line 8. Synonymous expressions include "*baqāyā min al-tajahhum wa-l-iʿtizāl*" (7:97, lines 14–15), "*baqāyā al-tajahhum wa-l-iʿtizāl*" (7:106, lines 4–5), and "*baqiyya min al-iʿtizāl*" (7:236, line 10).

[120] *Darʾ*, 7:97, lines 14–18; also *Darʾ*, 7:106, line 5.

[121] Ibn Taymiyya mentions al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, Abū ʿAlī al-Thaqafī (d. 328/940), and Abū Bakr b. Isḥāq al-Ṣibghī (d. 342/953 or 954) as among those who possessed "more knowledge of *ḥadīth* and Sunna than al-Ashʿarī had" but still fell into a similar trap and eventually retracted their positions. See *Darʾ*, 7:97, line 18 to 7:98, line 2.

[122] *Darʾ*, 2:99, lines 14–15.

[123] *Darʾ*, 2:99, lines 12–13.

Notwithstanding these reservations, Ibn Taymiyya's assessment of the early Ashʿarī school (that of the *mutaqaddimūn*) and its main authorities is overwhelmingly positive. In one particularly illuminating passage,[124] he recounts the scholarly filiation of and the transmission of doctrines among figures such as al-Bāqillānī and his student Abū Dharr al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (d. 434/1043), as well as Abū Naṣr al-Sijzī (d. 444/1052) and Abū al-Qāsim al-Zinjānī (d. 471/1078)—both of whom took al-Bāqillānī's doctrine from Abū Dharr al-Harawī—and "others like them among the top authorities in scholarship and religion,"[125] including such luminaries as Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī and al-Juwaynī. After mentioning these early Ashʿarī masters, he says of them collectively:

> There is not one among them who has not made praiseworthy efforts and performed meritorious actions for the sake of Islam and [who has not] engaged in refuting many of those [who call to] heresy and innovation and rallied to the defense of many [who uphold] the Sunna and [true] religion. This is not hidden to anyone who is familiar with their circumstances and who speaks of them with knowledge, truthfulness, justice, and impartiality.[126]

He then goes on to explain, however, that

> since [the problematic nature of such-and-such] principle, taken from the Muʿtazila, was not clear to them (*iltabasa ʿalayhim*), they, being people of distinction and intelligence, realized the need to apply [the principle] consistently and to abide by its entailments (*iḥtājū ilā ṭardihi wa-iltizām lawāzimihi*). For this reason, they were forced to take positions (*lazimahum min al-aqwāl*) that the scholars and people of religion found objectionable [and denounced]. Because of this, some people came to extol them for their merits and creditable traits, while others came to censure them on account of the innovations and falsehoods that had crept into their discourse. But the best path is the middle path.[127]

With respect to al-Ashʿarī in particular, Ibn Taymiyya maintains that while the champion of early Sunnī theological rationalism did not himself adopt any overtly errant positions, the seeds of such were nonetheless implicit in some of his basic assumptions. When his later followers became aware of the full entailments (*lawāzim*) of the positions he did adopt, they desired to maintain consistency; they thus adhered to the consequences al-Ashʿarī's initial doctrine and allowed their substantive positions to be modified accordingly.[128] In this manner, Ashʿarī theologians in each new generation were pulled farther back towards Muʿtazilī-style negationism as they sought to apply al-Ashʿarī's own doctrine consistently and to tease out systematically all the implications and entailments of their master's initial positions. For a similar reason, while al-Ashʿarī and his immediate followers, according to Ibn Taymiyya, did not concede even the theoretical possibility of a contradiction between reason and revelation,[129] later Ashʿarīs—such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233)—who "took from the Muʿtazila when they inclined towards negationist doctrines (*tajahhum*) and even towards philosophy,"[130] conceded not only the formal possibility but also the actual occurrence of real contradictions between reason and revelation, ultimately leading to the formulation of the universal rule as a means of ironing out the supposed incongruities.[131]

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[124] See *Darʾ*, 2:100–102.

[125] *Darʾ*, 2:101, lines 14–15.

[126] *Darʾ*, 2:102, lines 4–7. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[127] *Darʾ*, 2:102, lines 7–12. (See index of Arabic passages.)

So it is, explains Ibn Taymiyya, that with each successive generation of Ashʿarīs, we find ever increasing misgivings about one after another of the attributes predicated of God in revelation. These misgivings arise from alleged rational objections that al-Ashʿarī himself (and perhaps al-Bāqillānī too, since Ibn Taymiyya also sees him as having remained quite close to the Sunna) did not catch but that later thinkers uncovered in increasing number as they sought to work out consistently the full implications of his initial doctrine. Such slippage can likewise occur, according to Ibn Taymiyya, as later followers think up ever more numerous and sophisticated rational arguments to support their founder's initial doctrine—arguments that entail further negation and that had not occurred to the mind of the founder.[132] Such a proliferation of increasingly negationist arguments can be found not only among major Muʿtazilī figures of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries[133] but among primary

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[128] See *Darʾ*, 7:237, lines 1–16. The specific concession al-Ashʿarī made here to the Muʿtazila, according to Ibn Taymiyya, is the validity of the argument for the existence of God from the temporal origination of accidents (*ṭarīq al-aʿrāḍ*). See *Darʾ*, 7:236, lines 3–4.

[129] See *Darʾ*, 7:97, lines 5–7.

[130] *Darʾ*, 7:97, lines 4–5.

[131] On the influence of logic, both Aristotelian and Stoic, on eminent representatives of the later tradition, including figures such as al-Āmidī and Ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 646/1248), see Hallaq, "Logic, Formal Arguments and Formalization of Arguments," 322–327.

[132] See *Darʾ*, 5:247, line 19 to 5:248, line 2.

[133] Here Ibn Taymiyya specifically mentions Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915 or 916), his son Abū

Ashʿarī authorities as well. In this manner, says Ibn Taymiyya, al-Ashʿarī himself and his immediate successor, al-Bāqillānī, unambiguously affirmed the so-called revealed attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-khabariyya*), including those that had become a point of contention, such as God's face, hands, and His settling upon the throne. Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya avers, al-Ashʿarī is not known ever to have held more than one position on this issue, to the point that "those who transmitted his doctrine (*madhhab*) were not in dispute over [this]."[134] Not only did al-Ashʿarī affirm such attributes, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, but he also refuted the rational arguments of those, such as the Muʿtazila, who argued that such texts could not be understood "literally" but had to be reinterpreted figuratively (*yutaʾawwal*) in order to skirt a rational objection or a charge of *tashbīh*.[135] However, just two generations after al-Bāqillānī, Ibn Taymiyya bemoans, al-Juwaynī negates such attributes, "in agreement with [the doctrine of] the Muʿtazila and the Jahmiyya."[136] Concurring that such attributes could not be affirmed at face value, al-Juwaynī first adopted the position of *taʾwīl* in his *Kitāb al-Irshād*. In his later work *al-ʿAqīda al-Niẓāmiyya*, however, he upheld *tafwīḍ* instead, stating that "the early community (*salaf*) unanimously held that *taʾwīl* was neither permissible (*sāʾigh*) nor obligatory (*wājib*)."[137] Ibn Taymiyya is alluding here to a passage in al-Juwaynī's *Niẓāmiyya* in which he states:

> The authorities of the early community (*aʾimmat al-salaf*) refrained from *taʾwīl*, leaving the outer wording of the texts to stand as is and consigning their true meaning (*tafwīḍ maʿānīhā*) to the Lord most high. The opinion to which we [al-Juwaynī] consent and the rational stance we adopt in religious matters (*alladhī nartaḍīhi raʾyan wa-nadīnu Allāh bihi ʿaqlan*) is to follow the early community (*ittibāʿ salaf al-umma*), as it is preferable to follow [the early authorities] and to refrain from generating new doctrines [that conflict with theirs] (*fa-l-awlā al-ittibāʿ wa-tark al-ibtidāʿ*).[138]

As we have seen, Ibn Taymiyya vehemently rejects the view that the authoritative early community practiced *tafwīḍ* in any form. Rather, he insists, they were all full-fledged affirmationists who affirmed not only the wording of the

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Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī (d. 321/933), al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044), "and others." See *Darʾ*, 5:248, lines 3–5.

[134] See *Darʾ*, 5:248, lines 11–12.

[135] See *Darʾ*, 5:248, lines 18–20.

[136] *Darʾ*, 5:249, line 1.

[137] *Darʾ*, 5:249, lines 1–5.

[138] Al-Juwaynī, *al-ʿAqīda al-Niẓāmiyya*, 32 (mentioned in passing at *Darʾ*, 5:249 and cited in full by the editor at 5:249, n. 2). (See index of Arabic passages.)

revealed texts but also the meanings most naturally understood from this wording in light of the known linguistic convention of the first, prophetic community. (The question of interpreting revelation in light of the linguistic convention of the early community will occupy us at length in chapter 4.)

Eventually, in the fifth/eleventh century, we come to al-Ghazālī, who, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, at times affirms the "rational attributes" (*al-ṣifāt al-ʿaqliyya*), in conformity with the standard Ashʿarī position, and at times either negates them altogether or reduces them to the single attribute of knowledge, in agreement with the doctrine of the philosophers.[139] His final position on the issue, Ibn Taymiyya reports, was one of suspension of judgement (*waqf*), whereupon he clung to the Sunna as the safest path and died, allegedly, while engaged in studying the books of *ḥadīth*.[140] Finally, by the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries, al-Rāzī and al-Āmidī, both major authorities of later Ashʿarī *kalām*, had become so agnostic with regard to the reality and the knowability of the divine attributes affirmed in scripture—coupled with their proportionately decreasing confidence that revelation could serve as the basis for any certain (*yaqīn*), objective knowledge whatsoever, even in strictly theological matters—that they ultimately claimed not to have any proof at all, rational or scriptural, for either the affirmation or the negation of the divine attributes.[141] They thus ended up, essentially, in a draw over a major point of theology addressed extensively in revelation and sharply contested by the leading philosophical and theological minds of the preceding six centuries.[142] Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya observes, al-Āmidī was not even able to establish in his books doctrines as basic as the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), the temporal origination of the world (*ḥudūth al-ʿālam*), or even the very existence of God[143] and was reported by a "reliable authority" (*thiqa*) to have said, "I applied myself assiduously to the study of *kalām* but did not acquire anything [reliable] from it that differs from what the common people believe."[144]

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[139] In the following section (p. 118 ff.), we consider at greater length Ibn Taymiyya's relationship to al-Ghazālī and the position he held with respect to his esteemed predecessor.

[140] *Darʾ*, 5:249, lines 9–12. In another place, Ibn Taymiyya says more specifically that al-Ghazālī "died studying [a copy of] the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī." See *Darʾ*, 1:162, line 11. Such reports of deathbed disavowals of wayward doctrine are a common trope and cannot be taken at face value without further corroboration. With respect to this claim regarding al-Ghazālī, see Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 56–57.

[141] See *Darʾ*, 5:249, lines 6–8.

[142] See, for example, *Darʾ*, 5:313, esp. lines 10–12 for how, regarding the most basic and important aspects of religion, the major rationalists (*nuẓẓār*) are in "great confusion" (*ḥayra ʿaẓīma*). See also *Darʾ*, 7:283, lines 10–11, where they are said to be in "confusion, uncertainty, and doubt" (*ḥayra wa-shubha wa-shakk*). Similar indictments can be found in numerous places throughout the *Darʾ*. For a list of quotations by major thinkers who allegedly admitted that they had not gained any certain knowledge from their years of pursuing rational inquiry (*naẓar*) in the manner of the *mutakallimūn*, see *Darʾ*, 3:262, line 10 to 3:264, line 2. This list includes, among others, Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī (d. 646/1248), the top logician of his day.

The foregoing pertains to the *mutakallimūn* and Ibn Taymiyya's depiction of the historical development of *kalām*. With regard to the philosophers, Ibn Taymiyya blames their extreme form of negationism for Ibn ʿArabī's mystical notion of the "unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). The Bāṭiniyya (esotericists, often with specific reference to the Ismāʿīlīs), however, exhibit the most extreme form of negationism, to the point that they refrain from predicating *anything* of God whatsoever. The result is a purely—and, Ibn Taymiyya argues, highly incoherent—negative theology in which, ostensibly to avoid falling into *tashbīh* of any sort whatsoever, one may not even affirm that God exists (*mawjūd*) or that He does *not* exist (*ghayr mawjūd*), nor may one affirm that He is positively non-existent (*maʿdūm*) or that He is *not* non-existent (*ghayr maʿdūm*). Ibn Taymiyya also mentions that those whom he labels the "materialist (pseudo-)philosophers" (*al-mutafalsifa al-dahriyya*),[145] such as Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī, claim that reason rules out the possibility of a physical resurrection on the day of judgement, with the now familiar prescription that texts apparently affirming such a resurrection must be subjected to the (alleged) dictates of reason and reinterpreted accordingly. When those among the Muʿtazila who affirm bodily resurrection dispute with such philosophers over this matter, the philosophers reply with the same type of argument that the Muʿtazila employ against the affirmationists. The philosophers argue, essentially, that "our position on bodily resurrection is analogous to your position on the attributes,"[146] that is, if you (the Muʿtazila) are truly consistent, then you should also deny bodily resurrection on the same grounds on which you have denied the divine attributes.

This, then, is the chronological progression, as Ibn Taymiyya sees it, from what he contends was the conscientious and unrestricted affirmationism of the Salaf, buttressed by probative rational arguments and therefore in full conformity with pure reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*), to the outright negation of all divine names, attributes, and actions that arose as an ill-conceived response to alleged rational objections. Ibn Taymiyya rejects this negationism as being not only opposed to any plausible reading of the texts of revelation but also, significantly, in flagrant violation of the most elementary and universal principles of reason itself.

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[143] *Darʾ*, 3:263, lines 1–2.

[144] "*amʿantu al-naẓar fī al-kalām wa-mā istafadtu minhu shayʾan illā mā ʿalayhi al-ʿawāmm.*" *Darʾ*, 8:262, lines 15–16.

[145] The second form quadriliteral verb "*tafalsafa*" does not necessarily have the negative connotation of "pseudo-philosophizing" in all contexts and may, indeed, simply mean "to practice philosophy" in a neutral sense. (I thank Robert Wisnovsky for pointing this out to me.) Here, however, I deliberately translate it as "pseudo-philosophers" since that seems to be the connotation Ibn Taymiyya most likely wished to impart in this context.

[146] *Darʾ*, 5:250, lines 13–14.

Now, Ibn Taymiyya holds that while all these developments—and increasingly grave deviations—were occurring among those formally involved in theological and philosophical speculation, there always remained a group, including many scholars and the majority of the common folk, that persisted in upholding, and also in rationally defending, the understanding of the revealed texts bequeathed to the *umma* by its earliest—and, once again, uniquely authoritative—generations. According to Ibn Taymiyya, this group included the majority of *ḥadīth* scholars, a majority of legal scholars (*fuqahāʾ*, sing. *faqīh*) in the early centuries and a good number in his day, as well as the majority of early ascetics and Sufis. Some among this group were so repulsed by the very nature and contentiousness of the discussions raging among the theologians and philosophers that they refused even to engage in them and were content faithfully to uphold what they knew to be the understanding of the early community. Ibn Taymiyya is keen to point out, however, that others among this group did take it upon themselves to engage in theological debate in an attempt to provide an adequate *rational* defense of the received normative understanding of the Salaf. We may venture to affirm that Ibn Taymiyya would be happy to include al-Ashʿarī (though not, to be sure, the majority of later Ashʿarīs) among this group, albeit with the abovementioned caveat regarding the "remnant of *iʿtizāl*" that marred al-Ashʿarī's initial doctrine and that later festered, at the hands of his most astute successors, into what Ibn Taymiyya saw as the pseudo-philosophical, quasi-Muʿtazilī approach of a sixth-/twelfth-century al-Rāzī or a seventh-/thirteenth-century al-Āmidī.

Most prominent among the rationally engaged traditionalists was Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), the revered eponym of the legal and theological school to which Ibn Taymiyya adhered and the scholar that he credits with having adduced, in the process of establishing the foundations of theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*), "a larger number of definitive proofs (*adilla qaṭʿiyya*), based in both revelation and reason, than all other major authorities."[147] Ibn Taymiyya further asserts that Ibn Ḥanbal "did not forbid appealing to a valid rational argument that leads to [knowledge of] what is meant to be proved (*yufḍī ilā al-maṭlūb*)" and adds that, in his disputations with the Jahmiyya and other groups opposed to the normative, orthodox understanding of the early community, Ibn Ḥanbal employed rational arguments such as are "well known in his writings and among his followers."[148] To substantiate this point, Ibn Taymiyya cites two specific examples of rational inferences (*qiyāsayn ʿaqliyyayn*) used by Ibn Ḥanbal to refute this or that doctrine of a negationist,[149] closing with the statement that "Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal] draws inferences on the basis of rational arguments (*yastadillu bi-l-adilla al-ʿaqliyya*) in theological matters *as long as they are valid*" (emphasis mine).[150] Ibn Taymiyya further highlights Ibn Ḥanbal's broad authority among scholars and non-scholars alike as the heroic champion of orthodoxy against the official state imposition of Muʿtazilī doctrines during the *miḥna*. In this vein, Ibn Taymiyya cites on several occasions in the *Darʾ* a lengthy quotation from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, which reads:[151]

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[147] *Darʾ*, 7:154, lines 7–8.

> Praise be to God, who has appointed in every non-prophetic era (*fī kulli zamān fatra min al-rusul*) remnants of the people of knowledge (*ahl al-ʿilm*) who call those who have strayed [back] to right guidance and are forbearing in the face of what harm [they may receive from those they call], who bring back to life by the Book of God those who are dead [spiritually] and who grant vision, by God's light, to those who are blind. How many dead victims of the devil have they brought to life! How many of those wandering in error have they guided aright! How comely, then, is the effect they have on people and how odious the effect of people on

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[148] *Darʾ*, 7:153, line 19 to 7:154, line 1.

[149] See *Darʾ*, 7:154, line 19 to 7:155, line 8.

[150] *Darʾ*, 7:155, lines 9–10. See also *Darʾ*, 5:180, line 1ff.: "Given that this is known by reason, Aḥmad said …" (*wa-lammā kāna hādhā yuʿrafu bi-l-ʿaql qāla Aḥmad …*). For a study that addresses Ibn Ḥanbal's use of reason and argument in theological matters, see Williams, "Aspects of the Creed of Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal."

[151] Ibn Taymiyya states that this passage appears in the work *al-Radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-l-zanādiqa* (also *"al-zanādiqa wa-l-jahmiyya"*), attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and he cites it on several occasions in the *Darʾ* (see next note). The *Radd* is translated in Seale, *Muslim Theology*, 96–125 (the translation of the passage cited here, however, is mine). Jon Hoover points out (on the basis of al-Sarhan, "Early Muslim Traditionalism," 29–54) that while earlier forms of this text may go back to Ibn Ḥanbal, the final version of it contains substantial rational argumentation against non-traditionalist doctrines and may thus be seen as a fifth-/eleventh-century text attributed retroactively to Ibn Ḥanbal to legitimize rational argumentation in theology among the Ḥanbalīs (on the assumption that Ibn Ḥanbal would not have approved of or engaged in such himself). See Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," 627. Be that as it may, Ibn Taymiyya certainly took this text as authentically attributable to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, a position that matches his general portrayal of Ibn Ḥanbal as someone who not only approved of (valid forms of) rational argumentation but who also, indeed, exemplified these in his own polemical engagements with theological adversaries.

> them! They exonerate the Book of God from the distortions of extremist sectarians (*al-ghālīn*), the misrepresentations of those who falsify religion (*intiḥāl al-mubṭilīn*), and the (unfounded) interpretations (*taʾwīl*) of the ignorant who have raised the banners of heretical innovation (*bidʿa*) and unloosed the reins of discord (*fitna*). They are those who oppose the Book and differ over it, united only in their abandoning of the Book. They discourse on God and the Book of God with no knowledge and speak in vague and ambiguous terms (*yatakallamūna bi-l-mutashābih min al-kalām*), fooling thereby the ignorant among men. We seek refuge, therefore, in God from the trials of those who lead [others] astray (*fitan al-muḍillīn*).[152]

Ibn Taymiyya certainly sees himself as following in the footsteps of his revered forebear and, along with all the rightly guided defenders of the early doctrine mentioned above, clearly aspires to take his place in the cortège of those "remnants of the people of knowledge who call those who have strayed [back] to right guidance" by providing, via his *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, *the* definitive answer to the seemingly insoluble "conflict" between reason and revelation that had been building for so many centuries.

TABLE 3 Ibn Taymiyya's account of the development of the conflict between reason and revelation

610 CE–AH 11/632 CE	Age of revelation in the form of the Qurʾān and the prophetic Sunna. Prophet conveys full and adequate understanding of the theological content of revelation to his Companions.
11–220/632–835	Period of the Salaf, comprising the first three generations of Muslims praised by the Prophet: – the Companions (ca. 11–100/632–718) – the Successors (ca. 100–170/718–786) – the Successors of the Successors (ca. 170–220/786–835)
	Salaf unanimously affirm all the divine attributes without interpreting them figuratively (*taʾwīl*) or disavowing their literal sense while entrusting their true meaning to God (*tafwīḍ*).
early second/eighth c.	First negationist positions arise with al-Jaʿd b. Dirham and his student, Jahm b. Ṣafwān.
	Authoritative scholars of the Salaf unanimously condemn negationism (*nafy*) and defend affirmationism (*ithbāt*), partly through the use of rational argumentation.

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[152] Cited three times, at *Darʾ*, 1:18, 1:221–222, and 2:301–302; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Radd*, 55. (See index of Arabic passages.)

TABLE 3 Ibn Taymiyya's account of the conflict between reason and revelation (*cont.*)

second half of second/eighth c.	Early Muʿtazila deny that accidents or temporally originating events supervene in God, implying negation of attributes such as knowledge, power, creating, or settling on the throne.
	Initial negationism with respect to the divine attributes eventually leads to the doctrine of the createdness of the Qurʾān, which is unanimously denounced by the Salaf.
	Salaf continue unanimously to uphold the subsistence in God both of attributes and of actions and speech contingent upon His will.
early third/ninth c.	Ibn Kullāb introduces a distinction between God's essential attributes, intrinsic to the divine essence, and His volitional attributes, which cannot be said to "subsist" in God.
mid-third/ninth c.	Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal emerges from the *miḥna* as a hero of Sunnī orthodoxy—the position of the majority of the common folk as well as the majority of *ḥadīth* scholars, *fuqahāʾ*, and early ascetics and Sufis. Ibn Taymiyya credits Ibn Ḥanbal with the use of solid rational arguments in defense of orthodoxy where necessary.
	Ibn Karrām opposes Ibn Kullāb and upholds, along with the majority of Muslim factions, the subsistence of temporally originating events in God.
late third/ninth to early fourth/tenth c.	Rise of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī. Defends orthodox doctrines through rational means but retains "remnants of *iʿtizāl*" that draw figures of the later Ashʿarī school back towards Muʿtazilī theses.
	Al-Ashʿarī and his immediate followers affirm all the divine attributes—including God's face, hands, and settling on the throne—and refute, by way of rational proofs, Muʿtazilī arguments that these attributes must be interpreted figuratively in order to avoid *tashbīh*.
	Al-Ashʿarī and his immediate followers do not concede even the possibility of a conflict between reason and (the plain sense of) revelation.
late fourth/tenth to early fifth/eleventh c.	Prominent Ashʿarī figures, such as al-Bāqillānī and al-Isfarāyīnī, continue championing orthodox doctrines while unwittingly conceding certain principles to the negationists.
	Flourishing of Ibn Sīnā, whom Ibn Taymiyya classifies, along with al-Fārābī a century earlier, as a "materialist (pseudo-)philosopher." He faults them for extreme negationism of the divine attributes, the denial of physical resurrection, and their view of revelation as an imaginative evocation rather than as literally true.
early to late fifth/eleventh c.	Flourishing of numerous Ashʿarī figures whom Ibn Taymiyya praises highly, including al-Bāqillānī and al-Juwaynī (and, in the first half of the next century, Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī). Given their acumen and desire for consistency, these figures draw out some of the entailments of al-Ashʿarī's initial Muʿtazilī-influenced assumptions and uphold their consequences. This trend increases in subsequent generations, leading to greater adoption of Muʿtazilī-like theses.

TABLE 3 Ibn Taymiyya's account of the conflict between reason and revelation (*cont.*)

	Despite general praise of al-Juwaynī, Ibn Taymiyya faults him for adopting *tafwīḍ* vis-à-vis attributes such as God's hands and face (and for attributing this stance to the Salaf).
late fifth/eleventh to early sixth/twelfth c.	Flourishing of al-Ghazālī, whom Ibn Taymiyya faults for being inconsistent on the reality of the attributes, sometimes affirming them, sometimes negating them or reducing them to the single attribute of knowledge, and eventually suspending judgement on them altogether.
late sixth/twelfth to early seventh/thirteenth c.	Flourishing of al-Rāzī and al-Āmidī, whom Ibn Taymiyya faults for their agnosticism regarding the reality and knowability of the divine attributes and their corresponding skepticism of the power of reason to reach truth in fundamental matters of theology.
early to mid-seventh/thirteenth c.	Death of Ibn ʿArabī, whom Ibn Taymiyya excoriates for an extreme form of "negationism" in the guise of his monistic mystical esotericism.
661–728/1263–1328	Life and work of Ibn Taymiyya.

6 The *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* in Context: Ibn Taymiyya's View of Previous Attempts to Solve the Conundrum of Reason and Revelation

Ibn Taymiyya was not, of course, the first Muslim thinker to attempt, on a grand and conclusive scale, to put an end to the conflict between reason and revelation. Notwithstanding the several figures (mentioned at the end of the preceding section) whom Ibn Taymiyya credits with providing a rational defense of orthodox understandings regarding the divine attributes and other issues, there were several notable attempts by theologians and philosophers before him to provide a definitive solution to this most vexing of issues. The works of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī[153] and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī[154] represent attempts to reconcile reason and revelation from a *kalām* perspective, while those of Ibn Sīnā[155] and Ibn Rushd represent parallel attempts made by the philosophers.[156] Before taking up the details of Ibn Taymiyya's solution to this question, we first briefly review how, in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, he assesses his predecessors' attempts at a resolution and how he seeks to position his own efforts with respect to theirs. Below, we discuss Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd on the philosophers' side and al-Ghazālī on the side of the theologians. As for al-Rāzī, the *Darʾ* as a whole is, in a sense, a response to his articulation of the universal rule, Ibn Taymiyya's critique of which occupies the entirety of the following chapter.

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[153] The main studies on al-Ghazālī relevant to the points discussed here are (in chronological order) Chelhot, "«al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm»"; Othman, *Concept of Man in Islam*, 33–70; Marmura, "Ghazali and Demonstrative Science"; Kleinknecht, "Al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm"; Fayyūmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-ʿalāqat al-yaqīn bi-l-ʿaql*; Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to Know God"; Aydin, "Al-Ghazâlî on Metaphorical Interpretation"; Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 111–122; Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist"; and Griffel, "Theology Engages with Avicennan Philosophy."

[154] For al-Rāzī's views on reason and revelation as well as scriptural interpretation, see Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 68–117; Kafrawi, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Sources of Ta'wīl"; and the sources listed below at p. 133, n. 5; p. 134, n. 7; and p. 184, n. 12.

We begin with the two philosophers, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd, whom Ibn Taymiyya recognizes to have held very similar, if not identical, views regarding the purpose and scope of revealed religion as well as the nature of the relationship between reason and revelation.[157] Following in the footsteps of al-Fārābī[158]—and, indeed, characteristic of the Muslim philosophers as a whole—both Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd (1) consider the language of revelation on metaphysical, theological, and eschatological topics to be almost entirely symbolic or allegorical rather than literal; (2) regard the purpose of revelation as primarily moral-ethical and legal-political rather than cognitional or epistemic; (3) distinguish sharply between the common folk (*ʿāmma*), whom the pictorial language of revelation is meant to motivate in the performance of good deeds, and the philosophical elite (*khāṣṣa*), who attain to metaphysical, theological, and eschatological truth by dint of rational inquiry; and (4) censure the *mutakallimūn* for confusing the common people by publicly reinterpreting certain Qurʾānic verses figuratively, and for doing so on the basis of what they decry as substandard argumentation and inconclusive reasoning.

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[155] Pertinent studies on Ibn Sīnā's approach to reason, epistemology, and the relationship between reason and revelation include Street, "An Outline of Avicenna's Syllogistic"; McGinnis, "Avicenna's Naturalized Epistemology"; Acar, "Talking about God: Avicenna's Way Out"; Acar, *Talking about God and Talking about Creation*; Shihadeh, "Aspects of the Reception"; Alper, "Epistemological Value"; and, with particular relevance to Ibn Taymiyya in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, Michot, "Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary."

[156] The main studies on Ibn Rushd relevant to the points discussed here are (in chronological order) Wolfson, "Double Faith Theory"; Hourani, "Ibn-Rushd's Defence of Philosophy"; Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*; Mahdi, "Remarks on Averroes' Decisive Treatise"; von Kügelgen, *Averroes und die arabische Moderne*; Butterworth, "Source that Nourishes"; Alain de Libera's introduction to Averroès, *Discours décisif*, 5–83, as well as his introductory essay in Averroès, *L'Islam et la raison*, 9–76; and Ḥamāda, *Ibn Rushd fī Kitāb Faṣl al-maqāl*.

[157] See Michot, "Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary," 168–170 for examples of parallels, on the question of hermeneutics and the nature of revelation, between Ibn Sīnā's *al-Aḍḥawiyya fī al-maʿād*, on the one hand, and Ibn Rushd's *al-Kashf ʿan manāhij al-adilla* [hereafter *Manāhij*] and *Faṣl al-maqāl*, on the other. Ibn Taymiyya comments at length in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* on both *Aḍḥawiyya* (at *Darʾ* 5:18–86) and *Manāhij* (at *Darʾ*, 6:212–249). For a detailed study of Ibn Taymiyya's engagement with Ibn Rushd in the *Darʾ* and, particularly, in his earlier treatise *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya*, see Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd." In this study, Hoover demonstrates how "Ibn Taymiyya puts Ibn Rushd to work marginalizing his opponent Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī from his self-proclaimed position as a mainstream rationalist theologian and refuting his arguments" (Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd," 475).

[158] On al-Fārābī, see Mahdi, "Alfarabi on Philosophy and Religion"; O'Meara, "Religion als Abbild der Philosophie"; Schoeler, "Poetischer Syllogismus—bildliche Redeweise—Religion"; Germann, "Natural and Revealed Religion"; López-Farjeat, "Faith, Reason, and Religious Diversity"; and El-Rayes, "The *Book of Religion*'s Political and Pedagogical Objectives."

With respect to Ibn Sīnā's views on reason and revelation, Ibn Taymiyya dedicates a substantial section at the beginning of Argument 20 (*Darʾ*, vol. 5) to a treatment of his treatise *al-Aḍḥawiyya fī al-maʿād*, the third section of which contains Ibn Sīnā's hermeneutical prescription for dealing with revealed texts that are thought to conflict with reason.[159] In the *Aḍḥawiyya*, which Yahya Michot labels the "most controversial writing of the Shaykh al-Raʾīs,"[160] Ibn Sīnā confirms that "the revelation (*sharʿ*) and religion (*milla*) that come on the tongue of a prophet are meant to address the generality of the masses (*al-jumhūr kāffatan*)."[161] Accordingly, it is inadmissible (*mumtaniʿ*) that the doctrine of *tawḥīd* be presented in its true form to the common people. Ibn Sīnā defines the true doctrine of *tawḥīd* as

> the affirmation of the Maker (al-Ṣāniʿ) as one, transcendently beyond [or "sanctified above": *muqaddas ʿan*] quantity, quality, place, time, position, and change, such that one come to believe that He is one essence (*dhāt wāḥida*), unique in kind, without any existential part (*juzʾ wujūdī*), either quantitative or qualitative, and that it [His essence] can be neither inside nor outside the world, nor such that He can be pointed to [as being] here or there.[162]

Indeed, Ibn Sīnā maintains, "had it [the doctrine of *tawḥīd*] been presented in this manner to the native Arabs and the uncouth Hebrews,[163] they would have rushed to deny it and would have concurred that the belief to which they were being called was belief in a non-existent (*īmān bi-maʿdūm*)."[164]

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[159] For extensive background on and analysis of Ibn Sīnā's *Aḍḥawiyya*, followed by a translation of Ibn Taymiyya's commentary on it in the first part of Argument 20 (at *Darʾ*, 5:18–86), see Michot, "Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary."

[160] Michot, "Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary," 164.

[161] *"al-sharʿ wa-l-milla al-ātiya ʿalā lisān nabī min al-anbiyāʾ yurāmu bihā khiṭāb al-jumhūr kāffatan." Darʾ*, 5:11; Ibn Sīnā, *Aḍḥawiyya*, 97.

[162] *Darʾ*, 5:11; *Aḍḥawiyya*, 97–98. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[163] Referring not to the Jews of seventh-century Arabia or eleventh-century Persia but to the

Ibn Sīnā goes on to affirm that while certain Qurʾānic expressions, such as "God's hand is over their hands" (Q. *al-Fatḥ* 48:10), are clearly meant figuratively or metaphorically, in accord with the expansive norms of Arabic locution,[165] other expressions, such as God's "coming in the shadows of clouds" (see Q. *al-Baqara* 2:210), cannot plausibly be interpreted as figures of speech in light of Arabic rhetorical conventions.[166] Indeed, he concludes, "[If we] suppose that all such expressions are to be taken as metaphors, then where is the *tawḥīd*? Where is the expression [in revelation] that explicitly indicates the pure *tawḥīd* to which the reality of this upright religion calls, the majesty of which is professed on the tongues of all the sages of the world?"[167] Ibn Sīnā then strikes out at the *mutakallimūn* by asking rhetorically where revelation mentions any of the theological subtleties with which they concern themselves, such as whether God is knowledgeable by virtue of His essence (*ʿālim bi-l-dhāt*) or by virtue of an attribute of knowledge (*ʿālim bi-ʿilm*), whether He occupies space (*mutaḥayyiz*) or is spatially located (*fī jiha*), and so on. He concludes that

> it is apparent from all this that religious teachings (*sharāʾiʿ*) have come to address the masses according to what they can understand, bringing closer to their minds that which they cannot understand through the use of allegory (*tamthīl*) and similitude (*tashbīh*). Had it been otherwise, [these] teachings would have been of no avail whatsoever (*la-mā aghnat al-sharāʾiʿ al-batta*).[168]

It follows from this, as Ibn Sīnā states explicitly, that "the apparent sense of revelation cannot serve as an argument in these matters [specifically, eschatology]."[169] Knowledge of this truth, however, is intended for "those who aspire to be among the elite of the people and not the masses."[170] As for the masses, they should be left to have faith in the outward meaning of scripture and not

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original Hebrew tribes to whom Moses brought the Torah. Farther on in the *Aḍḥawiyya*, Ibn Sīnā refers to "the barbarous Hebrews and the [uncultured] desert Arabs" (*ghutm al-ʿIbrāniyyīn wa-ahl al-wabar min al-ʿArab*). *Darʾ*, 5:16; *Aḍḥawiyya*, 101.

[164] *Darʾ*, 5:11; *Aḍḥawiyya*, 98. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[165] "*fa-huwa mawḍiʿ al-istiʿāra wa-l-majāz wa-l-tawassuʿ fī al-kalām.*" *Darʾ*, 5:14; *Aḍḥawiyya*, 100.

[166] See *Darʾ*, 5:12–13; *Aḍḥawiyya*, 99.

[167] *Darʾ*, 5:14; *Aḍḥawiyya*, 100. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[168] *Darʾ*, 5:17; *Aḍḥawiyya*, 103. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[169] "*ẓāhir al-sharāʾiʿ ghayr muḥtajj bihi fī mithl hādhihi al-abwāb.*" *Darʾ*, 5:18; *Aḍḥawiyya*, 103.

[170] "*man ṭalaba an yakūna khāṣṣan min al-nās lā ʿāmman.*" *Darʾ*, 5:18; *Aḍḥawiyya*, 103.

be confused by the non-literal interpretations of the *mutakallimūn*, nor should they be made privy to the real knowledge of *tawḥīd* that the philosophers have discerned through the light of reason.

As for Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyya cites and discusses in the *Darʾ* numerous lengthy abstracts from the philosopher's works, most notably his *al-Kashf ʿan manāhij al-adilla fī ʿaqāʾid al-milla* [hereafter *Manāhij*].[171] Ibn Taymiyya cites Ibn Rushd at length, mainly for his concession, as a leading philosopher, that the revealed texts convey nothing but pure affirmationism with regard to the divine attributes and in no wise intimate, even remotely, the types of "negationist" *taʾwīl* given to them by the *mutakallimūn*.[172] Ibn Rushd, in fact, goes so far as to say that "affirming spatial location [of God] (*ithbāt al-jiha*) is obligatory by virtue of both revelation and reason; this is what revelation has come with and is built upon. Nullifying this principle [or rule: *qāʿida*] amounts to a nullification of religious teachings (*sharāʾiʿ*),"[173] as the masses (*al-jumhūr*) are incapable of conceiving anything that does not have a counterpart in sensory reality. For this reason, revelation prohibits (*yazjuru ʿan*) delving into such matters if there is no need. It is thus obligatory, Ibn Rushd tells us, to defer to the way in which revelation itself deals with such matters and to refrain from interpreting figuratively that which the texts do not explicitly treat as figurative.[174] Deflecting the obvious sense of revelation in favor of non-apparent, figurative interpretations (*taʾwīlāt*) derived through reason only confuses the common people and undermines their confidence in the veracity and integrity of scripture.

In upholding the necessity of literal interpretation for the populace while strictly limiting the real truth of *tawḥīd* and other metaphysical realities to the philosophical elite, Ibn Rushd, like Ibn Sīnā before him, launches a heavy attack against the *mutakallimūn*. Human beings, he tells us, fall into three categories (or ranks, *rutab*; sing. *rutba*) with respect to the metaphysical matters addressed in revelation:[175] (1) the general masses (*al-jumhūr*) and the majority (*al-akthar*), who experience no doubt when the texts are understood according to their literal meaning; (2) the “scholars who are firmly grounded in knowledge,”[176] who know the reality of such matters (*ʿarafū ḥaqīqat hādhihi al-ashyāʾ*) and who constitute a minority among people; and (3) those who stand above the rank of the commoners but below that of the scholars and who are assailed by doubts regarding such matters that they are unable to resolve. It is this third group that experiences revelation as “ambiguous” or indeterminate in meaning (*mutashābih*), and it is they whom God has censured in the Qurʾān.[177] For the scholars and the general public, revelation contains no ambiguity or indeterminacy. Ibn Rushd likens these two groups to healthy people, whose bodies benefit when given the nourishment appropriate to them (namely, the literal meaning for the common people and the abstract rational truth for the “scholars,” that is, the philosophers). The third group, on the other hand, are like the sick, and they are the minority among people. Ibn Rushd specifies that these are “the people of disputation and discursive theology” (*ahl al-jadal wa-l-kalām*),[178] whose figurative interpretations (*taʾwīlāt*) of scripture “are not based on firm proof (*burhān*), nor do they have the effect of the overt meaning in [bringing about] the masses’ acceptance of and knowledge about [such matters].”[179] As Ibn Rushd explains, “the primary objective of [religious] knowledge with respect to the masses is [righteous] action: whatever is more beneficial in [encouraging righteous] action is better. As for the objective of knowledge with respect to the scholars, it comprises both matters together, namely, knowledge and action.”[180]

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[171] Among the most significant of these abstracts is a lengthy citation from *Manāhij* (followed by Ibn Taymiyya's commentary) at *Darʾ*, 6:212–249 (esp. 6:217–227). The other major work of Ibn Rushd directly relevant to the present theme is his *Faṣl al-maqāl* and its appendix (*Ḍamīma*), both of which are translated in Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* and in Butterworth, *Averroës: Decisive Treatise & Epistle Dedicatory*.

[172] See Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd," 474 and *passim*. Hoover speaks (p. 483) of Ibn Taymiyya's "audacity and ingenuity in invoking Ibn Rushd to supplant Ibn Sīnā and marginalize al-Rāzī" and notes that Ibn Taymiyya, despite his differences with Ibn Rushd, nonetheless invokes him at length to provide the strongest refutation of the *mutakallimūn*'s (public) practice of reinterpreting seemingly corporealist descriptions of God in revelation.

[173] *Darʾ*, 6:216; Ibn Rushd, *Manāhij*, 178. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[174] "*fa-yajibu an yumtathala fī hādhā kullihi fiʾl al-sharʿ wa-lā yutaʾawwala mā lam yuṣarriḥ al-sharʿ bi-taʾwīlihi*" (*Manāhij*: "*wa-an lā yutaʾawwala*"). *Darʾ*, 6:217; *Manāhij*, 179.

Ibn Taymiyya cites with much approval Ibn Rushd’s insistence that revelation only be interpreted publicly in a straightforward, literal manner. In this vein, he cites Ibn Rushd’s critique of al-Ghazālī—who, in Ibn Rushd’s words, “came and the torrent of the valley rose and choked up the meadow”[181]—for having shared with too many people what ought to have remained a private discussion among the qualified philosophical elite. Ibn Rushd censures al-Ghazālī for "divulging the entirety of philosophy and the views of the philosophers to the masses"[182] and for venturing to make positive figurative interpretations of various verses, then revealing these interpretations to a dangerously wide section of the public.[183] In fact, Ibn Taymiyya cites Ibn Rushd page after page with such apparent approbation that we begin to wonder if he fully grasped Ibn Rushd's ultimate position on the (non-)status of revelation as a purveyor of knowledge—though in other passages, it is quite clear that Ibn Rushd's true position was, of course, not lost on him.[184] In fact, Ibn Taymiyya describes Ibn Rushd as

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[175] See *Darʾ*, 6:217–218; *Manāhij*, 179.

[176] “*al-ʿulamāʾ al-rāsikhūna fī al-ʿilm*” (*Darʾ*, 6:218; *Manāhij*, 179: “*al-ʿulamāʾ*”), an allusion to Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:7, discussed at length at p. 184 ff. below.

[177] “*wa-hādhā al-ṣinf hum alladhīna yūjadu fī ḥaqqihim al-tashābuh fī al-sharʿ wa-hum alladhīna dhammahum Allāh taʿālā.*” *Darʾ*, 6:218; *Manāhij*, 179. God’s censure of this group for finding *tashābuh* in revelation is also a reference to Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:7.

[178] *Darʾ*, 6:219; *Manāhij*, 180.

[179] “*laysa yaqūmu ʿalayhā burhān wa-lā tafʿalu fiʿl al-ẓāhir fī qabūl al-jumhūr lahā wa-ʿilmihim ʿanhā*” (*Manāhij*: “*wa-ʿamalihim ʿanhā*”). *Darʾ*, 219–220; *Manāhij*, 180.

[180] *Darʾ*, 6:220; *Manāhij*, 180. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[181] “*jāʾa [Abū Ḥāmid] fa-ṭamma al-wādī ʿalā al-qarī.*” *Darʾ*, 6:222; *Manāhij*, 182. The standard

> inclining towards the esotericist philosophers (*bāṭiniyyat al-falāsifa*) who consider it obligatory to hold the masses to the outward [meaning of revelation], just like those among the theologians, jurists, and scholars of *ḥadīth* who adopt their [i.e., such philosophers'] position. He [Ibn Rushd] does not belong to the esotericist Shīʿa, like the Ismāʿīlīs and those of their ilk who openly declare [their] heresy and make a show of flouting the religious prescriptions of Islam. But in terms of negating the [divine] attributes, he is worse than the Muʿtazila and their likes, [reaching] the level of his brethren from among the esotericist philosophers.[185]

As for al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyya likewise discusses his works and opinions on numerous occasions in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*. Although al-Ghazālī was much more of a theologian than a philosopher and, in fact, dedicated one of his most famous works, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, to refuting just the type of philosophy triumphed by the likes of Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd,[186] Ibn Taymiyya is cool, at best, towards

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form of this proverb, used to indicate that an evil has transgressed its bounds, is "*jarā al-wādī fa-ṭamma ʿalā al-qarī*." See al-Maydānī, *Majmaʿ al-amthāl*, 1:159 (#823).

[182] "*ṣarraḥa bi-l-ḥikma kullihā lil-jumhūr wa-bi-ārāʾ al-ḥukamāʾ*." *Darʾ* 222–223; *Manāhij*, 182.

[183] See *Darʾ*, 6:222–237 for Ibn Taymiyya's citation of an extensive passage from *Manāhij* in which Ibn Rushd criticizes al-Ghazālī. (Corresponds to *Manāhij*, 182–191.)

[184] Ibn Taymiyya also wrote a separate treatise in refutation of Ibn Rushd. See Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd ʿalā falsafat Ibn Rushd*.

[185] *Darʾ*, 6:237, line 10 to 6:238, line 2. (See index of Arabic passages.) See also Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd," 485–487 for the translation of a lengthy passage from *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya* in which Ibn Taymiyya criticizes Ibn Rushd harshly.

[186] Al-Ghazālī was, of course, responding to the philosophers primarily in the person of Ibn Sīnā, whose impure and admixed Aristotelianism was the subject of considerable critique on the part of Ibn Rushd himself. But see Janssens, "Al-Ghazzālī's *Tahāfut*," as well as Frank,

al-Ghazālī throughout the *Darʾ*.[187] He is respectful of al-Ghazālī's immense erudition and spiritual accomplishment—paying homage to "his tremendous intelligence and piety (*taʾalluh*), his knowledge of discursive theology (*kalām*) and philosophy, and his traveling the path of abstemiousness, disciplining of the soul, and *taṣawwuf*"[188]—and he is ready, as usual, to recognize laudable and well-intentioned efforts in the service of truth and the defense of Islam where due.[189] Notwithstanding, he observes that while al-Ghazālī may have refuted many of the false doctrines of the philosophers, he capitulated to many of them as well, becoming thereby a sort of "interstice (*barzakh*) between them [the philosophers] and the Muslims"[190]—so much so that even the likes of the Andalusian mystical philosopher Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185), whom Ibn Taymiyya labels one of the "mystically inclined of the heretics" (*ṣūfiyyat al-malāḥida*), could find affinity with (*yastaʾnisu bi*) some of al-Ghazālī's doctrines.[191]

With specific reference to the issue of reason and revelation, Ibn Taymiyya faults al-Ghazālī for launching a purely destructive attack against the philosophers and for contenting himself (as al-Ghazālī himself states in the introduction to the *Tahāfut*) with using any argument he could lay his hands on to expose the philosophers' incoherence (their "*tahāfut*"), regardless of whether the argument was valid in and of itself. In this manner, al-Ghazālī was satisfied, as Ibn Taymiyya puts it, to "confront falsehood with falsehood"[192] and, despairing ultimately of the ability of reason to reach any reliable conclusions in such matters, resorted to spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) and subjective experience (*dhawq*) as the surest means of arriving at truth and a proper understanding of revelation.[193] Here, Ibn Taymiyya paraphrases a passage from the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* in which al-Ghazālī states:

"Al-Ghazâlî's Use of Avicenna's Philosophy." On the relationship between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd, see Griffel, "Relationship between Averroes and al-Ghazālī."

[187] For Ibn Taymiyya's reception of and attitude towards al-Ghazālī, see Michot, "An Important Reader of al-Ghazālī: Ibn Taymiyya."

[188] *Darʾ*, 1:162, lines 8–9.

[189] See first block quotation on p. 109 above.

[190] *Darʾ*, 6:57, line 3.

[191] *Darʾ*, 6:56, line 14 to 6:57, line 1.

[192] See Ibn Taymiyya's citation of al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* at *Darʾ*, 7:164, lines 3–10. See also *Darʾ*, 6:223, lines 6–8, where he cites (via Ibn Rushd's *Manāhij*) al-Ghazālī, in his work *Jawāhir al-Qurʾān*, as admitting that the arguments used in the *Tahāfut* amounted to "(merely) dialectical arguments" (*aqāwīl jadaliyya*) and that the truth of the matter lay in the doctrine he expounded in the esoteric work *al-Maḍnūn bihi ʿalā ghayr ahlihi*.

[193] See *Darʾ*, 5:339, line 13 to 5:340, line 2.

> The moderate path (*ḥadd al-iqtiṣād*) between the wantonness (*inḥilāl*) of excessive *taʾwīl* and the rigidity (*jumūd*) of the Ḥanbalīs is a fine and subtle [point] comprehensible only to those who have been granted success [and] who perceive things by a divine light, not by means of receiving transmitted knowledge (*samāʿ*). Then, when the hidden aspects of things are made manifest to them as they truly are (*idhā inkashafat lahum asrār al-umūr ʿalā mā hiya ʿalayhi*), they consider (*naẓarū ilā*) the transmitted texts [of revelation] and the wording thereof; [then,] whatever agrees with what they have witnessed (*mā shāhadūhu*) by the light of certainty they affirm (*qarrarūhu*), and whatever disagrees [with this] they interpret figuratively [through *taʾwīl*] (*awwalūhu*).[194]

The contrasting views[195] that these men—Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya—held regarding the nature of knowledge and the most reliable means of gaining it are striking indeed and bring us back to the central concern of our study. For the philosophers Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd, reason is the ultimate guide to what is true and not true, real and not real, about the world. Objective human reason is (simplistically stated) what Aristotle took it to be; knowledge of truth and reality can be discovered most reliably through the rigorous and disciplined process of formal syllogistic demonstration bequeathed to the world by the First Teacher, that most distinguished sage from Stagira. The purpose—and, indeed, the genius—of revelation is not to enunciate forthrightly the greatest metaphysical and ontological, let alone eschatological, truths of the universe, for the subtlety of these truths is well beyond the ken of the vast majority of ordinary men. Rather, certain knowledge is what the philosophers, specifically the Peripatetics, have discovered through rational demonstration (*burhān*). This certain knowledge is a prize jewel that is accessible only to the gifted few; therefore, it must be tightly held within the circles of the intellectual elect and carefully guarded from falling into the hands of men who, not being blessed with philosophical minds, would only become confused by it or possibly led astray. Thus, for the philosophers, the ingenuity of revelation lies not in that it conveys to mankind precious and objectively true knowledge of things as they are but rather in the preeminent adroitness with which it symbolizes transcendent realities through evocative images. Although these images do not correspond to reality in any objective sense, they nevertheless accomplish the lofty moral objective of encouraging men to perform good deeds and to live their lives piously in such a manner as to ensure their ultimate success in the hereafter.

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[194] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 122. The full passage from al-Ghazālī, as translated here, is cited by the editor of the *Darʾ* at 5:339, n. 2 and 5:340, n. 2. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[195] Useful comparative studies include (in chronological order) Wolfson, *Avicenna, Algazali, and Averroes*; Qumayr, *Ibn Rushd wa-l-Ghazālī*; Sālim, *Muqārana bayna al-Ghazālī wa-Ibn Taymiyya*; Bello, *Medieval Islamic Controversy*; Saʿd, *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyya min falsafat Ibn Rushd*; Naqārī, *al-Manhajiyya al-uṣūliyya wa-l-manṭiq al-Yūnānī*; Puig Montada, “Ibn Rushd versus al-Ghazālī”; Sharqāwī, *al-Ṣūfiyya wa-l-ʿaql*; Griffel, “Relationship between Averroes and al-Ghazālī”; Wohlman, *Al-Ghazali, Averroës and the Interpretation of the Qurʾan*; and von Kügelgen, “Muslimische Theologen und Philosophen.” See also Michot’s remarks in “Mamlūk Theologian’s Commentary,” 170–172.

Ibn Taymiyya, for his part, concurs with al-Ghazālī's—and, arguably, al-Rāzī's[196]—skepticism regarding the Greek model of rationality that was adopted with such enthusiasm by so many of the intellectual elite among his Muslim coreligionists. Indeed, the mission of the *Darʾ* is to deconstruct this (to his mind) very particular and parochial, not to say ultimately incoherent, configuration of rationality and to do so in an even more radical manner than al-Ghazālī himself had attempted to do. Yet Ibn Taymiyya takes al-Ghazālī to task for his ultimate loss of faith in any notion of a publicly shared, reliable reason and for his attempt, instead, to establish moral and cognitive certainty on the ultimately subjective basis of private spiritual experience.

In contrast to al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyya shares with Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd—and, by extension, with the philosophers more generally—their optimistic assessment of reason and its ability to reach objective, true, and certain conclusions regarding many of the most fundamental truths about God, man, and the world. Nevertheless, he stands at the opposite end of the philosophers' conception of the language of revelation as merely evocative and pictorial rather than denotative and factual. For Ibn Taymiyya, it is the obvious sense of revelation, available and comprehensible to the elite and the commoner alike, that tells the real story by providing a factual, face-value account of all the themes addressed therein (even if the ultimate ontic reality of such transcendent matters as they are in and of themselves remains, of necessity, beyond the reach of our contingent and perforce limited human faculties). On the other hand, the ostensibly rational deductions of the philosophers and theologians are little more than a figment of their own imaginations—mental constructs that not only contradict revelation but also (as al-Ghazālī himself had so astutely demonstrated in the *Tahāfut*) fall apart on strictly rational grounds as well once rational investigation of them is truly pushed to the limit. In addition, Ibn Taymiyya censures the philosophers specifically for, as he sees it, demoting the value of revelation to one of a strictly pragmatic moral-ethical phenomenon that is essentially unrelated to the (higher) epistemic function of conveying to man objective knowledge about the reality of his existence and the various realms that God has created—the empirical/seen (*shāhid*) and the transcendent/unseen (*ghā'ib*), the present world (*dunyā*) and the life of the hereafter (*ākhira*). It is not, to be sure, that the philosophers prize knowledge less than action. In fact, quite the opposite is true, only that they do not look to revelation as a source of objective knowledge but limit the utility of the revealed texts to their pragmatic dimension alone.[197] Ibn Taymiyya, of course, recognizes and assigns great value to the practical moral guidance afforded by revelation,[198] yet he is nonetheless adamant in declaring that the most noble, lofty, and ultimately beneficial aspect of revelation is, precisely, the *knowledge* it provides human beings about God, themselves, and the ultimate significance of their worldly lives as a sowing ground for the abode of eternity that lies beyond.[199]

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[196] See p. 145, n. 34 below.

For the philosophers, then, we can come to know truth only through reason, and reason proper is what Aristotle conceived it to be: the demonstrative faculty operating deductively in terms of Aristotelian syllogistics. For al-Ghazālī, reason may well be what Aristotle conceived it to be, but, that being the case, it is ultimately of little use in reaching true knowledge of the most important matters. For Ibn Taymiyya, reason can enable us to reach definitive conclusions on the most important of matters, but precisely because it is *not* what Aristotle, and all who followed in his wake, conceived it to be. Al-Ghazālī's project, at least with regard to reason, would seem to be a primarily deconstructive one: he systematically dismantles the pretensions of philosophical mental acrobatics, but then, as if reason could not be anything other than what the philosophers esteemed it to be, he discards it altogether as a means for ascertaining the truth. Ibn Taymiyya conceives of his own project as going well beyond that of al-Ghazālī: he attempts to "counter what is unsound with what is sound" (*yuqābilu al-fāsid bi-l-ṣāliḥ*)[200] and to settle the issue of the vexed relationship between reason and revelation definitively by demonstrating that true, pure reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*) positively agrees with and corroborates revelation and can, moreover, be plausibly demonstrated to do so. Insofar as al-Ghazālī conceived of his work in the *Tahāfut* in purely deconstructive and negative terms—laying the philosophers' heretical doctrines to waste but without erecting in their stead a solid rational structure capable of demonstrating the inherent rational plausibility and consistency of revelation—then the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, at least in terms of the ambition Ibn Taymiyya harbors for it, goes significantly beyond al-Ghazālī's more circumscribed enterprise. Like the philosophers, Ibn Taymiyya seeks nothing less than a full resolution to the intractable standoff between reason and revelation—albeit on terms radically opposed to those proposed by his Peripatetic predecessors.

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[197] See *Dar'*, 5:359, lines 1–7 and 5:359, line 13 to 5:360, line 5 for the related point that what the philosophers' position here actually implies—if knowledge indeed be nobler than action—is that those who teach knowledge (namely, the philosophers) are, by implication, nobler and more beneficial to mankind than those who taught men only action (namely, the prophets).

[198] In fact, one of Ibn Taymiyya's main motivations for attempting to be rid of negationism once and for all is that the philosophers' highly abstract notion of a remote deity makes it nearly impossible for one to relate to God personally or to cultivate the religiously vital senses of love and awe of God necessary for one to worship Him in a meaningful way and to keep His commandments. For a full treatment of this crucial aspect of Ibn Taymiyya's theology and larger religious reform project, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, chap. 1, chap. 3, and *passim*.

[199] See *Dar'*, 5:358, lines 1–3, where Ibn Taymiyya states that what the Qur'ān addresses in terms of knowledge is quantitatively greater and qualitatively more noble than what it addresses in terms of works (*al-khiṭāb al-ʿilmī fī al-Qur'ān ashraf min al-khiṭāb al-ʿamalī qadran wa-ṣifatan*).

In the remainder of this study, we examine in detail just how Ibn Taymiyya accomplishes his projected tour de force. An affirmative verdict on the viability of Ibn Taymiyya's project would be of major significance, not only in terms of the ideas themselves but also in terms of current scholarly inquiry. Rather than stopping at al-Ghazālī's (negative) project of demolishing the philosophers' system, we would henceforth be obliged to include Ibn Taymiyya's *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* as another major episode in the conflict between reason and revelation in Islamic thought. Not only does Ibn Taymiyya's undertaking, as I have intimated, purport to be more fundamentally eradicative than al-Ghazālī's (since Ibn Taymiyya rejects even more of the inherited philosophical system than al-Ghazālī did, including the very logic on which the entire philosophical edifice was built), but it also—significantly—represents a conscientiously constructive, or rather *re*-constructive, project with two overriding aims. These aims are (1) to demonstrate that pure sound reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*) does exist and to establish, in positive terms, precisely what it is and (2) to show that this pure reason demonstrates not only that the philosophers' doctrines are false, incoherent, and positively irrational but also that what revelation reveals is, in diametric opposition to this, not just true (of course) but fully coherent and

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[200] See *Darʾ*, 1:376, lines 10–12, where Ibn Taymiyya explains that "light and guidance are only achieved by countering the corrupt with the sound, the false with the true, religious innovation with the Sunna, waywardness with guidance, and falsehood with truth." He then says, in conclusion, that "by this means, it becomes clear that valid indicants (*al-adilla al-ṣaḥīḥa*) are not subject to objection under any circumstances and that pure reason is in full conformity with authentic revelation." (See index of Arabic passages.)

demonstrably rational as well. As we have seen, Ibn Taymiyya insists that merely "refuting falsehood with falsehood" may be instructive insofar as it demonstrates how the philosophers and theologians refute one another's arguments, but this proves only that all these groups are in error. It is decidedly not sufficient, Ibn Taymiyya insists, for *establishing in rational terms* what is actually true and correct. This can only be done by "countering the corrupt with the sound and the false with the true," which conforms to both authentic revelation (*al-manqūl al-ṣaḥīḥ*) and pure reason (*al-maʿqūl al-ṣarīḥ*).[201]

The terms on which Ibn Taymiyya bids to resolve the conflict between reason and revelation in Islam are enormously ambitious. While previous attempts to defuse this tension generally demanded that revelation yield to the deliverances of a rationality largely conceived along Greek lines and constructed, ultimately, on the backbone of Aristotelian logic (a conception of rationality that had been taken for granted for centuries before him—even by the more textually conservative of theologians—as constitutive of reason per se), Ibn Taymiyya takes a distinctly different route. For him, simply reinterpreting or suspending revelation is not merely too facile a solution to the problem; it is also a largely disingenuous one, for the basic consequence of the universal rule, as he sees it, is that ultimately reason alone is granted the right to arbitrate, even on matters that fall outside its proper domain. With each new instance of figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*) or suspension of meaning (*tafwīḍ*), the integrity of revelation as a source of knowledge is further eroded until its epistemic function as a purveyor of truth is largely, if not entirely, eclipsed by a "reason" whose own deep-set incongruities conspire to preclude it, too, from yielding any bona fide knowledge, particularly of God and related matters theological. Sunk to the bottom of the Taymiyyan pyramid,[202] caught between a debilitated revelation shorn of its prerogative to convey truth and a dilapidated reason scattered in the winds of incessant schismatics and hobbled by incurable misgivings, the Muslim intellectual landscape of the early eighth/fourteenth century, to Ibn Taymiyya's mind, cried for a resolution. Yet our author's prescription does not consist in simply turning the tables on reason and bidding it to silence wherever and whenever revelation has spoken. For Ibn Taymiyya, not only would the intellectual inadequacy of such a "solution" render it perpetually unstable, but it would also violate the very imperative of revelation itself, with its recurrent appeal to "reflect," "consider," "reason," and "ponder," to say nothing of its own deployment of rational argumentation in recommending the plausibility of its doctrine to an originally skeptical audience. Ibn Taymiyya seeks the solution elsewhere: namely, in the elaboration of a (re)integrated epistemology in which conflict between reason and revelation is not merely staved off by the terms of a truce in which each antagonist enjoys supremacy in a separate domain of exclusive magisterium,[203] nor yet in which the historical tension between the two is artificially defused by subjugating one to what is deemed to be the terms of the other, nor even one in which the two (merely) coexist side by side in blissful harmony. Rather, Ibn Taymiyya's goal is nothing less than the full (re)integration of reason and revelation into a coherent epistemology in which a rehabilitated intuitive reason and an unaffected, straightforward reading of scripture are, as if flowing from a common font, fully corroborative and mutually reinforcing.

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[201] See ibid.

[202] See introduction, p. 7 above.

A mighty tall order indeed. Precisely how Ibn Taymiyya attempts this feat will command our attention for the remainder of this study.

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203 Consider Stephen Jay Gould's notion of "non-overlapping magisteria" between science and religion. See Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria" and Gould, *Rocks of Ages*.

CHAPTER 3

On the Incoherence of the Universal Rule and the Theoretical Impossibility of a Contradiction between Reason and Revelation

1 Ibn Taymiyya on the Universal Rule and the Variety of Responses It Has Elicited

In the year 606/1209, fifty-four years before the birth of Ibn Taymiyya, the great Persian Ashʿarī theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī passed away, leaving behind a massive body of writings.[1] Many of these writings were theological tracts aimed specifically at buttressing the position of the more textually conservative Ashʿarī school of theology against the more rationalistically inclined Muʿtazila. In one of his more influential theological treatises, *Asās al-taqdīs*,[2] al-Rāzī enunciates a so-called universal rule (*qānūn kullī*), a plea from Ashʿarī theologians for a truce in the ongoing battle between reason and revelation. By al-Rāzī's time, this universal rule had won the approval of the majority of his Ashʿarī colleagues, whose doctrine was steadily becoming the standard formulation of Islamic belief, expressed in rationalistic terms, throughout much of the Islamic world.[3]

The universal rule, as paraphrased by Ibn Taymiyya at the beginning of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*,[4] states:

> If scriptural and rational indications, or revelation and reason, or the obvious outward meaning of the revealed texts and the definitive conclusions

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[1] A summarized version of this chapter has appeared previously as El-Tobgui, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Incoherence of the Theologians' Universal Law." Note the change in terminology from "Universal Law" in the article to "universal rule" for "*al-qānūn al-kullī*" in the current work.

[2] Tariq Jaffer points out that al-Rāzī refers to this work, which is devoted entirely to the question of *taʾwīl*, as "*Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*"; this is also the title that is listed in Ḥājjī Khalīfa's *Kashf al-ẓunūn*. See Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 58–59, n. 19; Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, 1:333.

[3] For an overview of Ashʿarī principles of figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*) from al-Juwaynī to al-Jurjānī in the face of conflicting rational and scriptural evidence, see Heer, "Priority of Reason," 181–188.

[4] For a discussion of earlier statements of this rule in al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī and the relationship of Ibn Taymiyya's paraphrase of the rule in the *Darʾ* to these antecedents, see Griffel, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Ashʿarite Opponents," 15–30.

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> of rational thought—or other ways of phrasing it—are in conflict, then either (1) they must both be accepted, which is impossible as this would violate the law of non-contradiction [claiming both *p* and –*p*]; (2) they must both be rejected [which is also impossible as this would violate the law of the excluded middle (claiming neither *p* nor –*p*)]; or (3) precedence must be given to revelation, which is impossible since revelation is grounded in reason, such that if we were to give priority to the former over the latter [that is, to revelation over reason], this would amount to a rejection of both reason and [by extension] that which is grounded in reason [namely, revelation]. One must, therefore, (4) give precedence to reason over revelation, then either interpret revelation figuratively [to accord with reason] (*taʾwīl*) or negate the apparent meaning of revelation but refrain from assigning to it a definite, particular metaphorical meaning (*tafwīḍ*).[5]

Ibn Taymiyya cites an alternative formulation of this rule given by al-Rāzī in another work, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl*, in which al-Rāzī adds a significant detail—central to Ibn Taymiyya's overall concern in the *Darʾ*—namely, that "(the truth of) revelation can be established only through rational means, for it is *only through reason* that we can establish the existence of the Creator and know (the authenticity of) revelation."[6] Ibn Taymiyya laments that al-Rāzī and his followers have made this into a universal rule for interpreting revelation as it relates to God's attributes and other issues in which they deem reason to be in contradiction with what scripture affirms. Some of them—including al-Rāzī himself—add to this the notion that scriptural indicants (*adilla samʿiyya*) are, in fact, inherently incapable of engendering certainty and therefore cannot be relied upon in matters of definitive knowledge.[7] Ibn Taymiyya remarks that others before them had already articulated this universal rule, such as al-Ghazālī, who employed it in his short treatise *Qānūn al-taʾwīl*[8] to answer questions posed to him by some of his students, such as Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī. Ibn al-ʿArabī, in turn, articulated an alternative formulation of the rule in a lengthy work of the same title,[9] basing himself on the method followed by al-Ghazālī's teacher, al-Juwaynī,[10] and those before him such as al-Bāqillānī.[11] In sum, Ibn Taymiyya explains, every school of thought has established for itself an analogous rule: they take as true and objective knowledge what they deem to know on the basis of reason, then they subordinate revelation to this alleged "knowledge" and (re)interpret it accordingly.

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[5] *Darʾ*, 1:4 (see index of Arabic passages); see also al-Rāzī, *Asās*, 220–221. Al-Rāzī cites the same basic principle in similar terms in other works as well. See, e.g., al-Rāzī: *Maṭālib*, 9:116–117; *Muḥaṣṣal*, 51; *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, 1:143; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:163–164; *Masāʾil*, 39–40; *Maʿālim*, 48; and *Mafātīḥ*, 22:6–7. See Heer, "Priority of Reason," 184–185 for an English translation and discussion of the passages given here from al-Rāzī's *Asās* and *Masāʾil*. See Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 89–94 for a translation and discussion of these same two passages, as well as the passage cited here from *Mafātīḥ*. On *tafwīḍ*, see Abrahamov, "'Bi-lā Kayfa' Doctrine." On the universal rule, see also Adem, "Intellectual Genealogy," 210–229.

[6] Cited at *Darʾ*, 5:331, lines 2–4 (emphasis mine). See al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, 1:143 and similar at al-Rāzī, *Masāʾil*, 39–40. For statements by other major Ashʿarī theologians to the effect that reason is the only means by which the authority of revelation can be established, see, for example, ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*, 23; al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 358–360; and al-Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, 115. For English translations of the passages indicated in this note from al-Juwaynī's *Irshād* and al-Ghazālī's *Iqtiṣād*, see Heer, "Priority of Reason," 185–186. For a more expansive list of sources—including the writings of figures such as Shams al-Dīn al-Aṣfahānī (d. 749/1349), al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390), and al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413), as well as Muʿtazilīs who also held this doctrine—see Heer, "Priority of Reason," 193, n. 21 and 194, n. 22.

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[7] See, for example, *Darʾ*, 5:335, lines 2–3, where Ibn Taymiyya cites a passage from al-Rāzī's *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, a few pages after his statement of the universal rule cited above, to the effect that "transmitted textual indicants (*adilla naqliyya*) cannot be relied upon in matters of (definitive) knowledge (*al-adilla al-naqliyya lā yajūzu al-tamassuk bihā fī al-masāʾil al-ʿilmiyya*)." See al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, 1:146 (where, however, al-Rāzī has "*al-masāʾil al-ʿaqliyya*," not "*al-masāʾil al-ʿilmiyya*"). See also al-Rāzī, *Maʿālim*, 25; *Muḥaṣṣal*, 51; and *Arbaʿīn*, 2:253–254 (where, however, al-Rāzī states that textual indicants can yield certainty if backed up by *mutawātir* reports; see similar at al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 9:117). For further discussion of al-Rāzī's views on revelation and certainty, see El-Tobgui, "Hermeneutics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," 139–140 and, more extensively, Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 77–83 and 102–104. Notwithstanding al-Rāzī's qualification (in works such as *Arbaʿīn* and *Maṭālib*) about the ability of scriptural indicants to yield certain knowledge if corroborated by *tawātur*, Jaffer concludes—primarily on the basis of *Asās*, *Mafātīḥ*, and *Maʿālim*—that al-Rāzī fundamentally denies the possibility that even *mutawātir* reports can engender certitude (see Jaffer, 80–83), thus assigning "even the strongest of *ḥadīth* reports a low epistemic value" (Jaffer, 82). (These conclusions thus concur with the earlier findings of Goldziher, "Aus der Theologie," 230–237 and Arnaldez, "L'œuvre," 315.) Jaffer observes further that the radical nature of al-Rāzī's skepticism vis-à-vis *ḥadīth* was matched only by the "maverick Muʿtazilite" Abū Isḥāq al-Naẓẓām (d. between 220/835 and 230/845), the "only thinker who expresses such a degree of doubt about prophetic reports" and whose "views were considered radical even by Muʿtazilite standards." Jaffer, 81, n. 71 and 83, n. 77. Van Ess credits Ibn Taymiyya with having possessed a "well-informed insight" into the discussions that had taken place regarding the probity and proof value of scriptural indicants, specifically in his work *al-Furqān bayna al-ḥaqq wa-l-bāṭil*. See van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des ʿAḍudaddīn al-Īcī*, 409. Ibn Taymiyya, van Ess tells us, knew that al-Rāzī was among those who "polemicized most strongly against scriptural proofs," which he held to be fundamentally inconclusive (van Ess, 409). On these grounds, van Ess likewise characterizes al-Rāzī's position as an "extreme case" (ein Extremfall) (van Ess, 410).

[8] Al-Ghazālī, *Qānūn al-taʾwīl*, 19, 21. Related discussions can be found in al-Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, 116 and al-Ghazālī, *Fayṣal al-tafriqa*, 47–48. (For a translation and introduction to *Fayṣal al-tafriqa*, see Jackson, *On the Boundaries*.) For a presentation and analysis of al-Ghazālī's approach to metaphorical interpretation, see Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 111–122 (esp. 111–116) and, more expansively, Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist." For a translation of al-Ghazālī's *Qānūn al-taʾwīl*, see Heer, "Al-Ghazali: *The Canons of Taʾwil*."

[9] See Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī, *Qānūn al-taʾwīl*, 646–647. See also Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī, *al-ʿAwāṣim min al-qawāṣim*, 231.

Such reinterpretation of revelation as prescribed by the universal rule has conventionally been carried out in one of two ways: through (1) figurative interpretation, or *taʾwīl*, which is normally defined as assigning to a revealed text a meaning other than its overt or obvious (*ẓāhir*) sense in accordance with a conclusion reached through reason, or through (2) suspension of meaning, or *tafwīḍ*, normally defined as declaring the obvious meaning of a text invalid but refraining from providing any specific alternative interpretation, consigning ("*tafwīḍ*") its true meaning to God instead. Ibn Taymiyya subsumes both *taʾwīl* and *tafwīḍ* under a larger dichotomy composed of what he refers to as "alteration of meaning" (*tabdīl*), on the one hand, and "presumption of ignorance and misguidance" (*tajhīl* and *taḍlīl*), on the other. *Tabdīl*, in turn, comprises two sub-varieties: (a) "*wahm* and *takhyīl*" and (b) "*taḥrīf* and *taʾwīl*."

The first method of alteration of meaning, that of *wahm* and *takhyīl*, presupposes revelation to consist mainly of images and metaphors that, by design, do not correspond to the actual reality of metaphysical matters, such as the nature of God, angels, and other unseen realities, or the eschatological realities of heaven and hell. Rather, according to this view, revelation purposely induces men to conceive of God as consisting of an enormous body, to believe in the literal resurrection of bodies after death, physical rewards and punishments in the hereafter, and so on, as it is in the moral interest (*maṣlaḥa*) of the common people to be addressed in such a way. Indeed, it is only in this manner that they can successfully be called to religion and that their ultimate otherworldly benefit, which is consequent upon their acceptance of religion, can be assured.

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[10] See, for instance, al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 358–360.

[11] See, for instance, al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 259, where we read that "it is necessary to divert speech from its apparent meaning if rational and scriptural indicants rule out its being used in accordance with its primary sense" (*innamā yajibu ṣarf al-kalām ʿan ẓāhirihi idhā kānat dalāʾil al-ʿaql wa-l-samʿ tamnaʿu istiʿmālahu ʿalā mā warada bihi*). Ibn Taymiyya generally thinks very highly of al-Bāqillānī, no doubt since he was close in time to al-Ashʿarī and therefore still recognizably part of the early Ashʿarīs, or "*mutaqaddimūn*" (with al-Juwaynī seen as the bridge to the later doctrine). The universal rule (*al-qānūn al-kullī* or *qānūn al-taʾwīl*)—as later articulated by the likes of al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī, and al-Rāzī—does not appear in an explicitly crystallized form in al-Bāqillānī, though the idea and principle of *taʾwīl* are present (as in the citation from *Tamhīd* given here). See the comments of Muḥammad Sulaymān (ed.) in Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī, *Qānūn al-taʾwīl*, 246.

Among others, Ibn Taymiyya faults Ibn Sīnā for endorsing this kind of *tabdīl* (alteration of meaning) in his *Aḍḥawiyya*.[12]

The second method of alteration of meaning, that of *taḥrīf* and *taʾwīl*, concedes that those who were sent with revelation, such as the Prophet Muḥammad, did not intend their respective audiences to believe anything other than what is true in and of itself.[13] However, what is true in and of itself is precisely that which we come to know through the use of our reason, not necessarily what is suggested by a straightforward reading of the revealed texts. We must then proceed to make various figurative interpretations (*taʾwīlāt*) of the texts in accordance with what we believe our reason has established as true. Such interpretations, according to Ibn Taymiyya, typically involve interpreting words in ways that fall outside conventional usage (*ikhrāj al-lughāt ʿan ṭarīqatihā al-maʿrūfa*) and drawing on far-fetched figures of speech and unlikely metaphors (*gharāʾib al-majāzāt wa-l-istiʿārāt*).[14] If the method of *wahm* and *takhyīl* marks the philosophers' approach to revelation, then that of *taḥrīf* and *taʾwīl* represents the choice method of the (later) *mutakallimūn*, who engaged in making *taʾwīl* of the texts on the basis of (putatively) rational considerations.

Whereas both methods of *tabdīl*, or alteration of meaning, presume that the revealed texts possess a true meaning underneath their overt, or literal, sense (a meaning known by the bearer of revelation, the Prophet, and accessible to those possessing the requisite rational capacities), the approach that Ibn Taymiyya refers to as *tajhīl* and *taḍīl* posits a revelation that is partly incomprehensible.[15] The advocates of this approach concede that certain verses bear meanings other than those most naturally understood from them (*tukhālifu madlūlahā al-mafhūm minhā*) but hold that these true meanings are known to God alone. By consequence, the meanings of such verses are not even known to the Prophet or, by extension, to any of the Companions or Successors, let alone to later generations of Muslim scholars and common people. Those adopting this approach thus practice *tafwīḍ* by consigning the true meaning of such verses to God, believing this to have been the way of the pious forebears (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). Others maintain that the Prophet himself knew the true meanings of such verses but that he purposely refrained from clarifying them to the community. Rather, he left it for later scholars to convey the true meaning of these verses and to explicate them on the basis of rational arguments born of their efforts in the science of non-literal, or figurative, interpretation (that is, *taʾwīl*). However, given that the Prophet was commissioned to clarify the meaning of revelation to everyone so that they might be rightly guided, his failure to do so would, for Ibn Taymiyya, constitute a positive act of misguidance (hence, "*taḍlīl*").

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[12] For Ibn Taymiyya's full discussion of the method of *wahm* and *takhyīl*, see *Darʾ*, 1:8–11, along with the corresponding passage in Ibn Sīnā, *Aḍḥawiyya*, 97–103.

[13] For Ibn Taymiyya's full discussion of the method of *taḥrīf* and *taʾwīl*, see *Darʾ*, 1:12–13.

[14] *Darʾ*, 1:12, lines 4–5.

[15] See *Darʾ*, 1:14–17 for Ibn Taymiyya's full discussion of the method of *tajhīl* and *taḍlīl*.

2 The End Result of Figurative Interpretation (*taʾwīl*)[16]

I have made frequent mention of the notion of a "conflict" between reason and revelation, specifically with respect to what each allegedly says regarding the nature of God. I have also indicated that the claim of conflict typically takes the form of an assertion that revelation, taken in its obvious sense, seems to affirm of God certain characteristics that reason has judged cannot be properly ascribed to Him as doing so, reason is held to have determined, would result in either (1) violating one or more premises of a rational argument meant to prove the existence of God or the plausibility of authentic revelation or (2) likening God to created things in a manner that would compromise His unique divinity, a phenomenon known as *tashbīh* ("likening" or, more technically, "assimilationism"). The universal rule dictates that any such conflict be decided in favor of reason and that revelation be reinterpreted accordingly. But before taking up the details of Ibn Taymiyya's attempt to refute the universal rule, we must first get a clearer picture of what exactly is at stake for him in the alleged conflict between reason and revelation. What, in other words, did Ibn Taymiyya find so odious about interpreting revelation through *taʾwīl* that he felt obliged to write ten volumes in refutation of the universal rule? We can answer this question by considering Ibn Taymiyya's portrayal of the process and the inevitable result of increasingly wanton forms of textual reinterpretation.

One of the main motivations for denying certain of God's attributes—or the divine attributes in general—is, as previously mentioned, to avoid *tashbīh*, or likening God to created things.[17] An argument typical of this kind is the one made by the late fourth-/tenth-century Persian Ismāʿīlī ("Bāṭinī") missionary and Neoplatonic philosopher Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī (executed ca. 361/971)[18] in his work *al-Aqālīd al-malakūtiyya*.[19] This is the very type of argument by which, in Ibn Taymiyya's assessment, al-Sijistānī and other extreme "negationists" (*nufāh*) are able to get the better of the various groups that fall along the spectrum from the very slight negationism of the early Ashʿarīs, through the Muʿtazila, and on to the more comprehensive and systematic negationism of the philosophers. They are able to do this, he explains, because all such groups have concurred with the full-fledged negationists, such as the Bāṭiniyya, on the legitimacy, in principle, of making figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of the revealed texts by conceding to them the necessity of negating "what is called *tashbīh*" of any kind whatsoever.[20] In this manner, any group that affirms any of the divine names or attributes, such as the Living (al-Ḥayy), the Omniscient (al-ʿAlīm), the Omnipotent (al-Qadīr), and so on, is confuted by the claim that all such predications equally and ultimately entail assimilation (*tashbīh*).

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[16] Based on Arguments 30 (*Darʾ*, 5:286–288) and 32 (5:320–338).

[17] The term "anthropomorphism," by which *tashbīh* is often translated, is too restrictive here as it only implies likening God to human beings, whereas *tashbīh*, as we see in the current example, refers to the likening of God to *any* created thing—to anything, in short, that is other than God Himself.

[18] Alternatively, "al-Sijzī." He is reported to have been executed by the Saffarid governor of

How is this so? The negationist, Ibn Taymiyya explains, contends that the class of "living things" and the class of "existent things" each admit of a twofold logical division into that which is eternal (*qadīm*) and that which is originated in time (*muḥdath*). The fact that the basis of division (*mawrid al-taqsīm*) is shared between the two categories entails a kind of composition (*tarkīb*), which constitutes for the negationist a particularly pernicious form of assimilation, namely, that of corporealism (*tajsīm*). It also entails assimilationism in a more general sense since, according to the argument, if what is eternal (God) and what is temporally originated (the universe) are both said to be "existent," then they are similar to each other (*ishtabahā*) insofar as they are both subsumed under the nominatum of the term "existence" (*ishtarakā fī musammā al-wujūd*)[21]—a fact that inexorably amounts to assimilationism (*tashbīh*). And if it be further held that, say, one of two existing entities (namely, God) is also characterized by the fact of being necessary by virtue of itself (*wājib bi-nafsihi*), then this entity shares with the other, non-necessary entity in the nominatum of the term "existence" (*musammā al-wujūd*) yet is simultaneously distinct from it by virtue of its necessity. Furthermore, that aspect in which it resembles

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Sijistan "at an uncertain date (but not long after 361/971)." See Walker, "Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī," *EI*^{3} (2007-1), 25.

[19] Ibn Taymiyya's presentation and critique of al-Sijistānī's position is found in Argument 32 (specifically at *Dar*ʾ, 5:323, line 5 to 5:324, line 17).

[20] "*wāfaqūhu ʿalā nafy mā yusammā tashbīhan bi-wajh min al-wujūh*." *Dar*ʾ, 5:323, lines 7–8.

[21] The phrase "*mushārakat al-wujūd*" is a standard formula for articulating Ibn Sīnā's ontology subsequent to al-Rāzī. See Wisnovsky, "Essence and Existence," 40–48. On al-Rāzī's discussion of *mushārakat al-wujūd* in his *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī al-ḥikma*, see also Eichner, "The Chapter 'On Existence and Non-existence' of Ibn Kammūna's *al-Jadīd fī l-Ḥikma*," 158–163.

the non-necessary entity (namely, existence) is distinguished from that aspect in which it differs from that entity (namely, its necessity). This leads to the conclusion that the necessary by virtue of itself (*al-wājib bi-nafsihi*) is "composed" of both that in which it shares with the other entity (existence) and that which makes it distinct (its unique necessity). But, we are told, reason has determined that whatever is composite (*murakkab*) in any form is, of necessity, temporally originated (*muḥdath*) rather than eternal (*qadīm*), contingent (*mumkin*) rather than necessary (*wājib*). The deleterious result of God's essence being "composed" of two "parts," existence and necessity, is said to stem from the fact that such a "composed" entity would be dependent on (lit. "in need of") each of its parts (*muftaqir ilā juzʾihi*). Now, since a thing's part is necessarily other than the thing itself, the argument continues, it follows that the Necessarily Existent would be dependent on (*muftaqir ilā*) something other than itself. But that which depends for its existence on something other than itself cannot simultaneously be held to be necessary by virtue of itself (*wājib bi-nafsihi*), enjoying inherent necessity through nothing more than, or other than, its own self. It follows, therefore, that if God is truly God by virtue of His self-necessary, beginninglessly eternal existence, then He must be entirely and utterly simple (*basīṭ*) and in no manner "composed," even if such "composition" be merely a matter of His possessing an entity that is qualified by attributes (and it bears repeating that one of the attributes negated in this argument is the very attribute of existence itself).

In this manner, Ibn Taymiyya concludes, the extreme negationist is able to drag whoever has conceded to him these invalid starting principles (*uṣūl fāsida*) to an outright negation of the Necessarily Existent, whose factual existence (*thubūt*) is known by rational necessity to every reasonable individual. The Bāṭinī loses in the end, however, for he has brought upon himself the rather serious objection that if, in his desperate attempt to escape assimilationism, he holds that God is, say, neither "existent" nor "living" (as created entities are also said to be existent and living), then he has not escaped assimilationism at all; rather, he has fallen into an even more egregious form of it, for now he has likened God not to any contingent albeit *existent* thing but to that which is positively *non-existent*. If he then attempts to skirt this dilemma by claiming that God is neither existent *nor* non-existent, then he faces the unanswerable objection that "you have established in logic that for any two identical propositions that differ only in affirmation and negation, it necessarily follows that if one of them is true, then the other is false. Thus, if it is true that He exists, then it is false that He does not exist [and vice versa]."[22] In accordance with the law of the excluded middle, there is no escape from the fact that one or the other of these propositions must be the case. Pushed hopelessly into a corner, the Bāṭinī's final recourse is to declare, "I do not affirm *any* of the foregoing propositions: I do not affirm the proposition 'He is existent,' nor the proposition 'He is not existent,' nor the proposition 'He is non-existent,' nor the proposition 'He is not non-existent.'" This, Ibn Taymiyya concludes, is the ultimate position of the atheists (*malāḥida*).[23] By violating the most elementary laws of logic[24]—here the law of the excluded middle—such a person has fallen into a more serious quandary than the one from which he was attempting to escape. With regard to assimilationism, moreover, he has sought to escape likening God to any existent or non-existent thing by, in the end, likening Him not merely to what is possible but non-existent (such as a unicorn) but, even worse, to what is logically inconceivable and utterly devoid of even purely mental reality (such as a "four-sided triangle"). Not only does that which is "neither existent nor non-existent" have no ontological reality whatsoever, but it is not even logically conceivable and is thus a worse thing to be likened to than something that is at least conceivable even if predicated not to exist.

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[22] *Darʾ*, 5:324, lines 2–5. In other words, if the proposition "*P* exists" is true, then its inverse,

The foregoing, then, is an example of a denial of some or all of the attributes affirmed of God in revelation on the basis of a rational argument proffered in order to avoid assimilationism (*tashbīh*) at all costs, but this denial ultimately falls apart because it violates the most elementary laws of logic, thus resulting in the worst kind of assimilationism possible—namely, likening God to what is both ontologically impossible and logically inconceivable. Such arguments,

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"*P* does not exist," must necessarily be false, and vice versa. Holding both to be true simultaneously (that is, holding both *p* and –*p*) constitutes a violation of the law of non-contradiction, while holding both to be false simultaneously (that is, holding neither *p* nor –*p*) contradicts the law of the excluded middle.

[23] More often than not, Ibn Taymiyya uses the term *mulḥid* (pl. *malāhida*)—which, in modern Arabic usage, normally denotes an atheist—in the sense of "heretic," denoting someone who holds a position considered so fundamentally at odds with basic Islamic teachings as to place him beyond the faith (or very nearly so), even if such a person does not necessarily renounce belief in the existence of God. Given the context in which the term is used here, however, the term "atheist," in the literal sense of denying the very existence of God, is precisely what Ibn Taymiyya seems to have in mind.

[24] Here, "logic" is understood not as formal Greek syllogistics, which Ibn Taymiyya rejects, but as constitutive of just that kind of natural, intuitive, straightforward—in other words, "*ṣarīḥ*"—reason that, as we shall discover throughout this study, he champions forcefully. The laws of non-contradiction and the excluded middle, in any case, also lie at the basis of the Greek logic his opponents allegedly prize as the ultimate mechanism of disciplined rational inference. This allows Ibn Taymiyya to best them, as it were, by reducing their position to absurdity on the basis of the very principles they themselves claim to espouse.

according to Ibn Taymiyya, are typical of those put forth by the various groups of negationists, all of whom (a) concede the theoretical possibility of a bona fide contradiction between reason and (a plain-sense reading of) revelation; (b) concur that, in the event of such a contradiction, reason must be given priority over revelation; and (c) proceed to reinterpret the obvious sense of revelation (that sense which conflicts with their allegedly unimpeachable rational arguments and conclusions) through various degrees of metaphorical interpretation. This process of metaphorical interpretation continues until, eventually, the texts of revelation are eviscerated of any meaning whatsoever and denied all possibility of conveying any factual propositional content about God, the hereafter, or any other of a host of metaphysical, or "unseen" (*ghāʾib*), realities. This, in short, is what Ibn Taymiyya sees as the inescapable outcome of a consistent and rigorous application of the universal rule—and the *taʾwīl* it prescribes—as a means of accommodating revelation to the putative rational objections raised against discrete elements of its overt content.

3 Specious Rationality and Its Discontents: Reason in a Cul-de-Sac[25]

If such negationism is the result of a consistent application of reason, then we may ask, Is there any alternative other than to interpret metaphorically through *taʾwīl*, or neutralize through *tafwīḍ*, the "problematic" passages of scripture if we seek to safeguard the rational integrity—and, to a large extent, therefore, the plausibility—of revelation? Ibn Taymiyya answers this question about the possibility of an alternative in the affirmative and, in fact, dedicates the bulk of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*'s ten volumes to demonstrating that all the alleged rational objections brought to bear against a straightforward reading of revelation (particularly those verses pertaining to God and His attributes) fall apart on purely rational grounds. What is called "reason" gradually breaks down as we move farther away from the true, natural, innate, pure reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*) endorsed by revelation and exemplified by the Salaf.

Ibn Taymiyya begins his case with the observation that the principle according to which a person should give precedence to the deliverances of his own rational faculty over the obvious meaning of the revealed texts is not governed by a universally applicable rule (*qawl lā yanḍabiṭ*). This is so because *kalām* theologians and philosophers (who regularly dispute with one another over what they call "rational knowledge") often make opposite truth claims on the basis of identical appeals to rational necessity (*ḍarūra*) or to the results of discursive inference. For instance, both those who negate (some of) the divine attributes and the divine decree (Ibn Taymiyya singles out the Muʿtazila and those of the Shīʿa who followed them), on the one hand, and those who affirm the divine attributes and decree, on the other, claim to do so on the basis of allegedly conclusive rational arguments.

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[25] Based on Argument 9 (*Darʾ*, 1:156–170).

Moreover—and this is a cardinal tenet of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine on reason and revelation—the farther a school of thought is from the Sunna,[26] the greater the internal disagreement among its adherents concerning what the dictates of reason are.[27] This point is essential. For Ibn Taymiyya, reason and revelation *coincide* in a fundamental sense. As a result, the more a faction moves away from what reason *and* revelation essentially overlap in affirming, the more it experiences internal dissension, divergences of opinion, and incoherence purely in terms of rational thought, in addition to finding itself at increasingly greater odds with revelation. In other words, either one is fully in line with both pure reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*) and an essentially straightforward reading of authenticated revelation (*naql ṣaḥīḥ*) or one drifts away both from reason and from revelation simultaneously. In the latter case, one not only ends up contradicting revelation (and seeking to explain it away through an increasingly liberal use of the principle of *taʾwīl*) but also falls prey, at the same time, to increasingly intractable rational contradictions, divergences, and improbabilities.

This principle can best be illustrated in the form of the "Taymiyyan pyramid" encountered in the introduction and reproduced on the following page. Truth is that point of unicity, clarity, and certainty (*yaqīn*) at which the testimony of sound reason and that of authentic revelation are fully concordant. According to the pyramid, the Muʿtazila, for example, exhibit greater internal discord than the Ashʿarīs and other affirmationists among the *mutakallimūn*,

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[26] Ibn Taymiyya's use of the term "Sunna" is perhaps closest to the term "orthodoxy" (lit. "correct belief"). I retain Ibn Taymiyya's original term, however, since it is a more transparent rendering of precisely what "correct belief" is for him and how it is to be determined. For Ibn Taymiyya, as for the mainstream Islamic tradition as a whole, correct belief (as we explore in greater depth in the following chapter) is synonymous with the beliefs and practices of the first three generations (*qurūn*) of Muslims—that of the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*), the Successors (*tābiʿūn*), and the Successors of the Successors (*tābiʿū al-tābiʿīn*)—and particularly the first generation comprising the Prophet's own contemporaries. As we shall discover, Ibn Taymiyya's insistence that sound reason and authentic revelation always concur and never contradict necessarily entails that the first generations were in possession both of a uniquely normative—and hence quintessentially "orthodox"—understanding of sacred scripture *and* of the soundest rational methods used for understanding and reasoning about divine matters.

[27] See *Darʾ*, 1:157, lines 4–5.

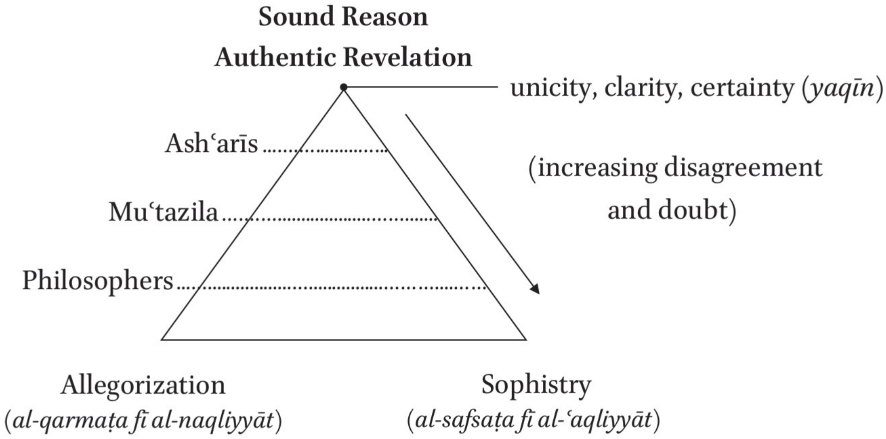
Sound Reason
Authentic Revelation
unicity, clarity, certainty (*yaqīn*)
Ashʿarīs
(increasing disagreement and doubt)
Muʿtazila
Philosophers
Allegorization
(*al-qarmaṭa fī al-naqliyyāt*)
Sophistry
(*al-safsaṭa fī al-ʿaqliyyāt*)

FIGURE 2 The Taymiyyan pyramid

as evidenced by the extent of disagreement between the Muʿtazilī school of Basra and that of Baghdad—though adherents of the former, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, are closer to the Sunna (that is, to "orthodoxy") than the latter and are therefore more internally united than their opponents from Baghdad. The Shīʿa evince even greater internal discord than the Muʿtazila since they are even farther removed from Sunna-based orthodoxy. As for the philosophers, Ibn Taymiyya remarks, it is almost impossible to find anything upon which they collectively agree. In point of fact, their internal divergences are greater than those that separate the distinct religious communities of Muslims, Jews, and Christians.[28] Indeed, he argues, the philosophers' differences with regard to astronomy alone—which is a computational, mathematical subject that figures among the most objective and accurate of their sciences—are greater than the differences among any of the various sects of Muslims. As for metaphysics, the leading philosophers themselves concede their inability to reach any kind of certitude regarding it whatsoever. Rather, their discourse on metaphysical matters amounts to no more than weighing various probabilities and hazarding judgements of likelihood and probability.[29]

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[28] Here, Ibn Taymiyya is apparently not referring to the internal divergences within each confessional community; rather, he is saying that the differences that separate the three communities are still fewer than those that divide the philosophers. In other words, Muslims, Jews, and Christians, notwithstanding the (sometimes fundamental) differences that separate them, are nevertheless in agreement with one another on a considerably greater number of issues than are the philosophers—all of whom claim, despite their wild divergences of opinion, to have arrived at their various doctrines through pure reason on the basis of rationally demonstrable arguments and unimpeachable proofs.

[29] *Darʾ*, 1:157, line 5 to 1:159, line 5. Ibn Taymiyya refers his reader to a number of sources to support his point regarding the disarray of the philosophers; these include al-Ashʿarī's *Maqālāt ghayr al-Islāmiyyīn* and al-Bāqillānī's *Daqāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq*, both of which, he ex-

To underline the specious nature of much of *kalām* discourse, Ibn Taymiyya appeals to several of the major rationalists (*nuẓẓār*) themselves who testify to the futility of their life-long efforts to attain theological certainty through the practice of dialectical theology. The following two lines by al-Shahrastānī, for instance, emphasize how such thinkers often reached only a state of confusion and perplexity:

I have made the rounds of the gatherings of the learned (*maʿāhid*)
And cast my eyes upon the haunts of erudition (*maʿālim*);
Yet never did I see but men perplexed, with their chins in their hands
Or gnashing their teeth in regret.[30]

Ibn Taymiyya also cites three lines of poetry to a similar effect from a work of al-Rāzī, which Ibn Taymiyya refers to as *Aqsām al-ladhdhāt*.[31] This passage reads:[32]

Entanglement, the acme of minds' pursuit,
Most human endeavour is but straying;
Our souls are estranged from our bodies,

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plains, contain many times more in the way of disputes and differences among the philosophers than what al-Shahrastānī (in his *Milal*) and others have mentioned. Al-Bāqillānī's *Daqāʾiq*, unfortunately, is lost. (See editor's note at *Darʾ*, 1:6, n. 3.)

[30] "*la-qad ṭuftu fī tilka l-maʿāhidi kullihā, wa-sayyartu ṭarfī bayna tilka l-maʿālimi / fa-lam ara illā wāḍiʿan kaffa ḥāʾirin, ʿalā dhaqanin aw qāriʿan sinna nādimi.*" *Darʾ*, 1:159, lines 10–11. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim (at *Darʾ*, 1:159, n. 2) also cites a two-line response to al-Shahrastānī from the latter-day Yemeni scholar Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. al-Amīr al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 1182/1768), who retorted, "*laʿallaka ahmalta l-ṭawāfa bi-maʿhadi, l-Rasūli wa-man lāqāhu min kulli ʿālimi / fa-mā ḥāra man yuhdā bi-hadyi Muḥammadin, wa-lasta tarāhu qāriʿan sinna nādimi*":

Perhaps your rounds have missed the learned circle (*maʿhad*) of the Prophet,
And every man of knowledge (*ʿālim*) who encountered him;
For he who is led by the guidance of Muḥammad is never perplexed,
Nor ever found gnashing his teeth in regret.

[31] See *Darʾ*, 1:159, lines 12–13. The more common name for this treatise is *Dhamm al-ladhdhāt* (or *Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*), a critical edition of which can be found in Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 212–265 (see pp. 205–209 for a discussion of the manuscript basis used for the edition), preceded by an extensive analysis and commentary at pp. 155–203. Shihadeh (p. 209) cites several alternative names by which the treatise is sometimes known and attributes the title *Aqsām al-ladhdhāt* solely to Ibn Taymiyya and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. Sālim remarks that Ibn Taymiyya cites these lines from al-Rāzī on numerous occasions throughout his writings. See *Darʾ*, 1:160, n. 4.

[32] As translated by Shihadeh (*Teleological Ethics*, 187).

The yield of our world, but harms and bane;
All we've gained from a lifelong research,
Is but collecting quotations and sayings.[33]

Ibn Taymiyya continues citing from the same work, where al-Rāzī states, in a manner reminiscent of al-Ghazālī in *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, that he has contemplated the methods of both the philosophers and the *mutakallimūn* and has found neither to be of any ultimate benefit. Rather, he has found that the most reliable way is that of the Qurʾān, which affirms the divine attributes in verses such as "The Most Merciful has settled upon the throne" (Q. *Ṭā Hā* 20:5) and "To Him ascends the goodly word and He raises up righteous deeds" (Q. *Fāṭir* 35:10). Yet it also contains verses that negate any notion of commensurability or essential comparability between God and creation, such as "There is none like unto Him" (Q. *al-Shūrā* 42:11), "They encompass Him not in knowledge" (Q. *Ṭā Hā* 20:110), and "Have you knowledge of anything like unto Him?" (Q. *Maryam* 19:65). Ibn Taymiyya concludes by quoting al-Rāzī's statement that "whoever experiences what I have experienced will come to know what I have come to know."[34]

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[33] "*nihāyatu iqdāmi l-ʿuqūli ʿiqālu, wa-aktharu saʿyi l-ʿālamīna ḍalālu / wa-arwāḥunā fī waḥshatin min jusūminā, wa-ḥāṣilu dunyānā adhan wa-wabālu / wa-lam nastafid min baḥthinā ṭūla ʿumrinā, siwā an jamaʿnā fīhi qīla wa-qālū.*" *Darʾ*, 1:160, lines 5–7. This passage as it appears in al-Rāzī (see Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 262) contains two additional lines: "*wa-kam raʾaynā min rijālin wa-dawlatin, fa-bādū jamīʿan musriʿīna wa-zālū / wa-kam min jibālin qad ʿalat shurufātihā, rijālun fa-zālū wa-l-jibālu jibālu.*" Shihadeh (*Teleological Ethics*, 187) translates:

Many a man and dynasty we have seen,
That all quickly perished and expired;
Many a mountaintop was surmounted,
By men, who perished, yet the mountains remain.

[34] *Darʾ*, 1:160, lines 12–13. For this quotation, see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21:501. In his *Tārīkh al-Islām*, 43:218–219, al-Dhahabī quotes al-Rāzī as saying, "I found the best (*aṣlaḥ*) and most correct (*aṣwab*) way to be that of the Qurʾān, which entails '*tark al-rabb*' [?], then refraining from going too deep (*tark al-taʿammuq*), then glorifying [God] greatly without delving into details." Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) transmits a quotation of similar import in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, 8:91. Tony Street, however, argues that when al-Rāzī's *waṣiyya* is read in its entirety, it is "hardly a repentance for having used *kalām*," but rather a question of al-Rāzī "simply recognizing his own scholarly limitations." Street, "Concerning the Life and Works," 4–5. Street goes on to identify none other than Ibn Taymiyya's (decontextualized) paraphrase of al-Rāzī's *waṣiyya* as giving rise to the claim, from the late eighth/fourteenth century onward, that al-Rāzī had "repented" from *kalām* on his deathbed. Shihadeh, in contrast to Street, affirms that al-Rāzī not only recognized his own scholarly limitations but also found himself, towards the end of his life, deeply pessimistic about whether reason could lead to certitude. See Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 155–203, esp. 181ff.

Ibn Taymiyya also cites nine lines of similar import from Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 656/1258), "one of the foremost Shīʿī thinkers with Muʿtazilī and philosophical leanings."[35] He also points out that the illustrious latter-day Ashʿarī theologian and legal scholar Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233), in most of his books, suspends judgement on many of the central issues of theology, declaring the arguments of various sects spurious but ultimately remaining perplexed and unable to take a position himself.[36] Similarly, the celebrated seventh-/thirteenth-century logician and judge of Persian origin, Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī (d. 646/1248), best known for his logical treatise *Kashf al-asrār ʿan ghawāmiḍ al-afkār*, was reported to have said on his deathbed, "I die having learned nothing but that the contingent is dependent on the impossible (*al-mumkin muftaqir ilā al-mumtaniʿ*), yet dependence (*iftiqār*) is a negative property; thus, I die having learned nothing at all."[37]

Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya remarks, even al-Ghazālī, despite his tremendous intelligence and pious devotion, his knowledge of discursive theology and philosophy, and his traveling the Sufi path of asceticism and spiritual discipline, nonetheless ended up suspending judgement on such matters and referred, in the final analysis, to the method of private intuition and spiritual unveiling (*kashf*). Nevertheless, he reports, al-Ghazālī returned to the way of the people of *ḥadīth* at the end of his life and, upon his death, was occupied with the study of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection of authentic prophetic reports.[38] Another result of the futility of the rational methods used in discursive theology, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, is that al-Ghazālī refuted the methods and arguments of the philosophers but did not affirm any particular method of his own. Rather, as al-Ghazālī admits in his famous work *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*,

> I hold them to the [full and undesirable] consequences of their doctrine (*ulzimuhum*) by arguing at times from the position of the Muʿtazila, at times from the position of the Karrāmiyya, and at other times from the position of those who suspend judgement (*al-wāqifa*), yet I refrain from defending any particular position myself.[39]

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[35] *"min fuḍalāʾ al-shīʿa al-muʿtazila al-mutafalsifa." Darʾ*, 1:161, line 1.

[36] *Darʾ*, 1:162, lines 3–4.

[37] *Darʾ*, 1:162, lines 4–7 (also cited in Ibn Taymiyya, *Radd*, 114). This incident is reported by ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī in *Sharḥ Mawāqif al-Niffarī*, 171. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[38] *Darʾ*, 1:162, lines 8–11. We have heard this claim before (at p. 112, n. 140 above). See Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 56–57.

[39] *Darʾ*, 1:163; al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 82–83. (See index of Arabic passages.) Ibn Taymiyya's critique of al-Ghazālī here is perhaps unjustified, at least with respect to the *Tahāfut*, as al-Ghazālī himself explicitly states that this work was meant to be purely deconstructive and that he had no intention of establishing or defending in it a systematic doctrine of his own.

Ibn Taymiyya also informs us that a group of leading *mutakallimūn* used to speak of the "equivalence of proofs" (*takāfuʾ al-adilla*), claiming that the various arguments advanced to prove a particular point cancelled one another out, making it impossible to determine, on rational grounds, truth from falsehood with respect to the given question. Ibn Taymiyya relates that it was reported to him that a certain Ibn Wāṣil al-Ḥamawī (d. 697/1298), who had studied with the foremost authority of his time in the fields of discursive theology and philosophy, used to say, "I lie in bed at night, pull the covers over my eyes, and weigh the arguments of this group and of that group until morning comes with neither position having proved to be the stronger one."[40]

Ibn Taymiyya contrasts the drastic agnostic pessimism expressed in the numerous quotations above with what he describes as the calm assuredness of those who know and who cling resolutely to the "original, pristine, orthodox, scripturally revealed prophetic method."[41] Such men are thoroughly familiar both with this method and with the doctrines that are said to be in contradiction with revelation, such as the claim of the createdness of the Qurʾān or the purely abstract or symbolic nature of the divine attributes. Therefore, they can easily recognize the invalidity of such doctrines by virtue of the deliverances of what Ibn Taymiyya calls "pure natural reason" (*al-maʿqūl al-ṣarīḥ*), which is always found to be in full conformity with what is affirmed by authentic revelation (*al-manqūl al-ṣaḥīḥ*). However, those who delve into the elements of philosophy and discursive theology that are said to contradict revelation, but without possessing full knowledge of the contents and the consequents (*lawāzim*) of the revealed texts or of the doctrines alleged to be at odds with them, are unable to arrive at any certain knowledge with confidence. Instead, they end up in confusion and perplexity. The most preeminent of them are even at a loss to furnish conclusive arguments for the existence of the Creator Himself, a topic of central concern to Ibn Taymiyya in the *Darʾ* and one that merits a study of its own. Some, he says, end up perplexed, like al-Rāzī, while others, like al-Āmidī, are forced to suspend judgement on the matter. Indeed, such thinkers often mention numerous positions held by different schools, claiming that truth lies in one or the other of them though they cannot necessarily determine which one. Yet *all* the various positions mentioned, Ibn Taymiyya declares confidently, can, in fact, be shown to be false and without rational foundation on the basis of pure natural reason (*bi-l-maʿqūl al-ṣarīḥ*).[42]

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[40] *Darʾ*, 1:165, lines 3–4.

[41] "*al-ṭarīqa al-nabawiyya al-sunniyya al-salafiyya al-Muḥammadiyya al-sharʿiyya.*" *Darʾ*, 1:164, line 1.

[42] See *Darʾ*, 1:164, *passim*.

4 Ibn Taymiyya's Project: Refuting the Universal Rule

If, as Ibn Taymiyya sees it, the rational processes advocated by the philosophers and the *mutakallimūn* lead to such an abusive "interpretation" of scripture and, at the same time, to a rational dead end in which reason itself breaks down, then what is the solution? This is the question to which Ibn Taymiyya has dedicated the entirety of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* and to which we turn our attention for the remainder of this chapter. Ibn Taymiyya's project in the *Darʾ*, at its most essential, consists in undermining and refuting the universal rule itself, along with the premises and assumptions on which it is based, since he considers this rule the primary cause of the intellectual and religious disarray he inherited at the turn of the eighth/fourteenth century. For Ibn Taymiyya, the project of refuting the universal rule is imperative not only to salvage the integrity of revelation but to rescue reason as well since *both* were dangerously compromised, in his view (and as illustrated by the Taymiyyan pyramid diagrammed above, p. 143), primarily by a faulty and abusive use of the rational faculty.

To refute the universal rule, Ibn Taymiyya puts forth around thirty-eight discrete "arguments" (*wujūh*, sing. *wajh*; lit. "aspects" or "viewpoints")[43]—located primarily in volumes 1 and 5 of the *Darʾ*—to demonstrate why the rule, as it came to be formulated, is logically unsound and, therefore, theoretically baseless. As is typical of Ibn Taymiyya's writings, a number of these arguments overlap with one another, some seemingly forming an expanded or summarized version of others. Furthermore, the arguments as Ibn Taymiyya presents them do not follow any specific logical order but rather are given one after the other as so many discrete objections to the universal rule. For our purposes here, instead of simply listing the arguments in the order in which Ibn Taymiyya presents them, I have grouped them by theme and argument. In each of the sections that follow, I paraphrase a coterie of arguments that share a unifying theme or that seem intended by their author to accomplish a common objective. The first three sections below (sections 5, 6, and 7) cover specific criticisms that, collectively, aim to shift the inherited paradigm of reason and revelation in three distinct ways. In the subsequent section (section 8), I present the gist of a number of more generic arguments Ibn Taymiyya levels against the overall coherence and logical validity of the universal rule, and in a final section (section 9), I showcase some of the purely revelation-based arguments he deploys against the universal rule, arguments that are meant to complement and support the primary rational arguments against it that form the backbone of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*. The presentation in sections 5 through 9 below, together with sections 2 and 3 above, accounts comprehensively for these thirty-eight arguments.[44] The remaining six of the forty-four arguments (*wujūh*) listed in the *Darʾ*,[45] it turns out, are not "arguments" at all but extended disquisitions (some of which run on for several hundred pages) concerning highly complex substantive philosophical and theological problems. In chapters 4 through 6, which deal with the more specific theological and philosophical issues Ibn Taymiyya takes up throughout the *Darʾ*, I introduce and analyze select portions of these six arguments, in addition to other relevant sections of the thirty-eight arguments presented globally in the remainder of the current chapter.

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[43] Tariq Jaffer discusses al-Rāzī's use of the *wajh* (translated as "viewpoint" or "argument"), which, in addition to the *masʾala* (which he renders as "question" or "point of investigation"), lies at the center of his dialectical method—a method that the philologist, littérateur, and biographer Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363) characterized as unprecedented. Jaffer explains that al-Rāzī used the *wajh* both to corroborate and to critique philosophical arguments and as a vehicle to record and resolve the *shubuhāt* (or *shubah*; sing. *shubha*)—that is, the objections or counter-arguments—raised against a given position. See Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 27–29. On the "dialectical turn" that occurred in the sixth/twelfth century, see Griffel, "Between al-Ghazālī and Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī."

5 On Reason Grounding Our Knowledge of Revelation[46]

Ibn Taymiyya endeavors to undermine the universal rule's main premise, namely, that giving precedence to revelation over reason would amount to a rejection of the very thing that grounds revelation (namely, reason), which would fatally undercut revelation itself. "Grounding" here implies that reason is the basis on which our knowledge of the truth and validity of revelation rests; that is, reason grounds revelation not ontologically but epistemologically.

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[44] Relevant sections of Arguments 17 and 18 are treated in subsequent chapters.

[45] Namely, Arguments 17 (*Darʾ*, 1:208–279), 18 (1:280–320), 19 (1:320–406?), 20 (5:3–203), 43 (6:3–353 and 7:3–140?), and 44 (7:141–464?). [N.B.: It is not clear whether Argument 19 ends at *Darʾ*, 1:406 or continues on to volume 2, nor is it clear whether Argument 43 stops at a point before *Darʾ*, 7:140. Similarly, it is unclear whether Argument 44 is meant to stop at the end of volume 7 or continues on to volume 8. These three *wujūh* are among the "arguments" that, as explained in the introduction (p. 14, n. 38 above), are not discrete arguments against the universal rule at all but rather extended discussions and refutations covering numerous topics and authors. Since each of these discussions carries on for sometimes hundreds of pages, it is difficult to determine exactly where the "argument" in question is meant to end.]

[46] The question of the manner in which revelation is grounded in reason is taken up primarily in Arguments 3 (*Darʾ*, 1:87–133), 24 (5:214–216), and 29 (5:268–286).

Ibn Taymiyya begins by challenging the philosophers' and theologians' notion of precisely what is implied by the claim that our knowledge of revelation is grounded in reason. “We do not concede,” he tells us, “that if precedence be given to revelation, this would amount to impugning the very thing that grounds it, namely, reason.”[47] This is so because if it is the knowledge we acquire through reason that constitutes the epistemological grounding upon which our knowledge of the truth and validity of revelation rests, it is nonetheless true that not *everything* known (or thought to be known) through reason is part of the rational knowledge that authenticates revelation. The various objects of knowledge apprehended through reason are innumerable, and knowledge of the validity and truth of revelation is contingent, at most, upon that by which the veracity of the Prophet Muḥammad and his prophetic mission can be determined. Relevant (rational) knowledge here would be, for example, proof of the existence of God, His vindication of the truthfulness of the Prophet through miracles, and the like. Ibn Taymiyya explains that the principal error of those who call for adherence to the universal rule is that they place all forms of rationally grounded knowledge in one category with respect to validity and invalidity. In reality, however, our ability to form a positive rational judgement on the validity of revelation does not require that all conclusions we may reach through our reason be true. Rather, it requires the validity only of those specific rational conclusions that relate to the truth of revelation (as a whole), not the validity of those rational conclusions that contradict or are incompatible with (certain of the discrete assertions of) revelation.[48]

It is significant that Ibn Taymiyya explicitly classifies knowledge of the existence of God, the reality of prophecy, and the possibility of miracles as propositions subject to verification through the use of reason. This is tantamount to an acknowledgement that revelation *is*, in fact, fundamentally grounded in reason, for it is by reason alone that we can test and confirm the most basic claims of revelation. This finding, recently corroborated by Frank Griffel,[49] thus corrects Nicholas Heer's contention that “as a Ḥanbalite traditionalist Ibn Taymīyah held firmly to the position that scripture was in no way dependent on rational arguments, either for the establishment of its truth or for an explanation of its meaning.”[50] Heer seems to have missed the fact that, according to

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[47] *Darʾ*, 1:87, lines 12–13.

[48] *“wa-maʿlūm anna al-samʿ innamā yastalzimu ṣiḥḥat baʿḍihā al-mulāzim lahu lā ṣiḥḥat al-baʿḍ al-munāfī lahu.”* *Darʾ*, 1:91, lines 4–5.

[49] See Griffel, “Ibn Taymiyya and His Ashʿarite Opponents,” 36–37.

[50] Heer, “Priority of Reason,” 191–192. In an earlier passage, Heer remarks, “Scripture, [Ibn Taymiyya] claims, does not have to be proven true through the use of reason, as the theolo-

Ibn Taymiyya, revelation does indeed rely on arguments—rational arguments—to support its principal doctrines. In fact, Ibn Taymiyya makes much of the fact that revelation includes and advances rational arguments, trying to wrest the rational high ground from the philosophers and the *mutakallimūn* and to reclaim it for revelation. It would be desirable to examine in detail the rational arguments Ibn Taymiyya gives for the existence of God and the possibility of miracles (as against those of the theologians and philosophers) in order to define precisely what he means when he claims that reason is capable of establishing such matters in a manner conclusive enough to lend the fundamental claims of scripture a baseline of rational plausibility. However, an in-depth analysis of such arguments lies beyond the scope of this study.

Ibn Taymiyya entertains a possible objection to his argument that the truth of revelation depends not on the inerrancy of the rational faculty per se but only on the accuracy of its specific judgements regarding the authenticity of revelation. According to this objection, one need not prioritize all rational conclusions over revelation but only those by which one has determined the validity of revelation. To this Ibn Taymiyya responds that with respect to the so-called *ʿaqliyyāt* (or rational conclusions) said to contradict revelation, he will demonstrate that none of them, in fact, form part of that rational knowledge upon which our knowledge of the authenticity of revelation is contingent. Therefore, every product of reason (that is, every *maʿqūl*) that is said to oppose revelation is, in fact, extrinsic to the set of (valid) rational judgements that ground (our knowledge of) revelation. From this Ibn Taymiyya concludes that challenging any of these particular judgements of reason does not, in fact, undermine the foundations of revelation.

This conclusion should be little cause for controversy since, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, most people agree that knowledge of the existence of God and the veracity of the Prophet—in other words, that rational knowledge upon which our knowledge of the authenticity of revelation *does* depend—is not contingent upon those elements of rationally derived knowledge that some claim to contradict revelation. For example, he tells us, those who have formulated and established (*al-wāḍiʿūna li*) the universal rule, such as al-Ghazālī, al-Rāzī, and others, concede that knowledge of the Prophet's veracity is not contingent upon any putative rational conclusions that are at odds with revelation. In fact, a great number of them—including al-Ghazālī himself, in addition to al-Shahrastānī, al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (d. ca. 502/1108), and others—hold that

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gians assert, because it itself contains all the arguments necessary to support its principal doctrines" (Heer, 188).

knowledge of the existence of God is both innate and necessary (*fiṭrī ḍarūrī*).[51] In addition, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, revelation itself is replete with rational arguments for the existence and omnipotence of the Creator and His corroboration (through miracles and signs) of the veracity of His Messenger. What revelation affirms of these matters does not contradict, but rather accords with (*yuwāfiq*), the rational foundations on the basis of which we come to know the authenticity of revelation. Furthermore, according to Ibn Taymiyya, revelation provides far more numerous—and far more evincive—rational arguments for such matters than we find in the books of the rationalists themselves. Even the majority of those who maintain that knowledge of the Creator comes about only through rational inference (*naẓar*)—as opposed to arising instinctively (*bi-l-fiṭra*)—concede, critically, that of the various inferential methods available for arriving at knowledge of the truthfulness of the Prophet, there indeed exist some that do not contradict anything affirmed in the revealed texts. In fact, al-Rāzī himself, Ibn Taymiyya informs us, is one of those who concur on this point, as evidenced by a passage in *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl* in which al-Rāzī concludes:

> It has been established that knowledge of the principles (*uṣūl*) upon the validity of which [our knowledge of the authenticity of] the messengership of Muḥammad (may God bless him and grant him peace) depends is patent and evident knowledge (*ʿilm jalī ẓāhir*); these principles have been discussed at length only to remove the doubts raised by those who would declare them false (*al-mubṭilūn*) … [Otherwise,] it is firmly established that the foundations of Islam are patent and clear and, furthermore, that the proofs establishing them are mentioned in a comprehensive manner (*ʿalā al-istiqṣāʾ*) in the Book of God [and are] free of anything erroneously imagined to oppose them.[52]

In establishing the foregoing point, Ibn Taymiyya reverses the universal rule to show that the opposite principle—namely, prioritizing revelation over reason in case of conflict—can be argued and defended in a precisely analogous manner.[53] This leads to the conclusion that if we cannot put reason above revelation or revelation above reason, then the truth (which is intrinsically coherent) must lie in the fact that these two sources of knowledge can never truly be in contradiction—the precise point Ibn Taymiyya is concerned to prove in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*. The opposite rule to the theologians' *qānūn al-taʾwīl* would state:

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[51] See, e.g., al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-iqdām*, 118–119.

[52] *Darʾ*, 1:96; al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, 4:290–291. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[53] For this point overall, see Argument 6 at *Darʾ*, 1:138–144.

> If reason and revelation contradict each other, then revelation must be given priority over reason since reason has adjudged revelation veracious in everything it contains, whereas revelation has *not* judged reason to be correct in all its various conclusions, nor is our knowledge of the authenticity of revelation contingent on (*mawqūf ʿalā*) all the separate conclusions at which reason may have arrived.[54]

This position, says Ibn Taymiyya, is better advised (*awjah*) than the previous position (that of granting blanket priority to reason over revelation) since reason indicates the truth of revelation in a general and unconditional manner (*dalāla ʿāmma muṭlaqa*). This is like the hypothetical case of Layman *A* (let us call him Zayd) and Layman *B* (let us call him ʿAmr). Zayd knows a particular man to be a reliable *muftī* and refers ʿAmr to him for legal advice. Now, if Zayd then differs with the *muftī*'s judgement in a particular legal matter, it would nevertheless be incumbent on ʿAmr to adhere to the *muftī*'s opinion over that of Zayd, despite the fact that Zayd is the source of ʿAmr's knowledge that the *muftī* was reliable to begin with. This is so because Zayd, by producing convincing evidence of the *muftī*'s competence, has established a general obligation to follow the *muftī*'s judgement on particular legal matters over anyone else's (including that of Zayd himself). ʿAmr's acceptance of Zayd's evidence that the *muftī* is competent does not obligate him to accept Zayd's opinion in all matters, nor, conversely, does Zayd's error in legal judgement (represented by his disagreement with the *muftī* on a particular point of law) entail that he was incorrect in his assertion of the *muftī*'s professional competence. This is true because Zayd's ability to determine accurately that the *muftī* is indeed competent in issuing legal responsa does not require that Zayd possess this same ability himself: one may, after all, confidently recommend a doctor to a friend without oneself possessing any detailed knowledge of medicine. Furthermore, ʿAmr's obligation to accept the *muftī*'s judgement holds even though the *muftī* is fallible and it is therefore conceivable for him to err in a given legal opinion. How much more obvious and stringent, then, is the obligation for us to accept the truth of what we have been informed of through the Prophet, who is known by reason (if he is truly a prophet) to be infallible in matters of conveying revelation from God? It follows from this, Ibn Taymiyya concludes, that the principle by which all agree that ʿAmr is obliged to hold the opinion of the *muftī* in higher esteem than that of Zayd on discrete legal points is even more applicable with regard to granting priority to the words of an infallible prophet over the conclusions of one's own decidedly fallible reasoning.[55]

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[54] *Darʾ*, 1:138, lines 1–3. (See index of Arabic passages.)

This is especially true, Ibn Taymiyya explains, given that the disparity between a prophet, on the one hand, and the most intelligent and knowledgeable of ordinary men, on the other, is manifestly greater than the disparity between, for instance, a master craftsman and a beginning apprentice. In fact, the difference involved is no less than categorical since, theoretically, any ordinary man could, by dint of sustained personal effort, attain mastery of a given field, whereas prophethood cannot be attained through personal striving but rather is bestowed by God upon those whom He has elected to the prophetic office.[56] Similarly, we trust and follow the prescriptions of physicians—regardless of the pain and inconvenience often occasioned by the remedies they prescribe and in spite of our knowledge that they may err and that their putative cures may even lead to our death—even when, at times, our own intuitions concerning the restoration of our health may be at odds with the doctor's orders. So what, then, of cases in which our mere conjecture—"rational" or otherwise—conflicts with what we *know* to have been revealed on the tongue of a prophet, whom we *know* through rational arguments to be infallible in his transmission of revelation to us from God?[57]

In addition to the foregoing rational arguments, Ibn Taymiyya also casts the issue in terms of a hypothetical that renders the religious implications of the matter immediately transparent. Imagine, he bids us, that someone had come to the Prophet during his lifetime and said to him:

> This Qurʾān, or Wisdom (*al-ḥikma*), that you have transmitted to us contains many elements that contradict what we know through our reason, yet we have only come to know your truthfulness through our reason as well. Thus, if we accept everything of which you inform us, despite the fact that reason contradicts some of it, then that would undermine the very thing—namely, reason—by which we have come to affirm your veracity.

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[55] *Darʾ*, 1:138, line 4 to 1:139, line 5.

[56] See *Darʾ*, 1:140, line 11 to 1:141, line 3. Ibn Taymiyya is citing here the orthodox theological position regarding the purely God-given, non-acquired (*ghayr muktasab*) nature of the prophetic office, as opposed to the philosophers' interpretation of prophethood as an essentially natural faculty analogous to the bursts of inspiration from beyond that may result from the personal spiritual efforts of a practicing sage or mystic. For more on various conceptions of prophethood in Islam, see Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*.

[57] *Darʾ*, 1:141, lines 10–16.

> We therefore hold to be true the positions derived from our reason that stand in contradiction with the plain meaning of what you have brought, from which [meaning] we turn away, gaining therefrom neither guidance nor knowledge.[58]

We know as a necessary fact of the Islamic religion (*naʿlamu bi-l-iḍṭirār min dīn al-Islām*),[59] says Ibn Taymiyya, that the Prophet would not have accepted this stance as constituting authentic belief in revelation. Indeed, if this were admissible, then it would be possible for anyone to object to any particular element of revelation. This is so because people differ in their intellectual capacities, there are numerous potential objections that could be raised against any given proposition, and Satan continually insinuates doubt and misgivings into men's hearts.

In summary, Ibn Taymiyya endeavors, through the set of arguments presented above, to undermine the universal rule's main premise, namely, that if precedence be given to revelation over reason, then this would amount to a rejection of the very thing that grounds revelation (namely, reason) and thereby fatally undercut revelation itself. Ibn Taymiyya challenges the philosophers' and theologians' notion of what it means for our knowledge of revelation to be grounded in reason by arguing, in essence, that what we call "reason" does not, as many imagine, constitute one undifferentiated category such that impugning any of the various conclusions reason might reach would amount to undermining all of them. Rather, he contends, there are innumerable discrete conclusions we might reach through the rational faculty, and our knowledge of the validity of revelation is contingent, at most, only upon those discrete elements of rational judgement through which, for instance, we can ascertain the veracity of the Prophet Muḥammad and the authenticity of his prophetic mission. If this be the case, then imprecating other conclusions of reason—such as those that contradict certain discrete assertions of revelation—would not, as most theologians and philosophers held, automatically compromise the rational faculty itself and each one of its sundry conclusions, not least the rational basis by virtue of which we may ascertain the authenticity of revelation.

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[58] *Darʾ*, 5:214, line 16 to 5:215, line 3. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[59] *Darʾ*, 5:214, line 16. For the point made in this paragraph in general, see *Darʾ*, 5:214–216, which comprises the entirety of Argument 24.

6 Knowledge vs. Conjecture: Conclusiveness Is What Counts[60]

Ibn Taymiyya's refutation of the universal rule consists in showing the falseness of its premises. The rule, as enumerated in section 1 above, is based on the following three premises:

1. There exists an actual contradiction between reason and revelation.
2. The possible options for dealing with the alleged contradiction are limited to the following four: (a) accepting both contradictory statements simultaneously, (b) rejecting both simultaneously, (c) prioritizing revelation over reason, or (d) prioritizing reason over revelation.
3. The first three alternatives in premise 2 are invalid. Therefore …

Conclusion: It is necessary to accept the fourth alternative, namely, giving priority to reason over revelation and reinterpreting revelation accordingly.

Ibn Taymiyya rejects all three premises as invalid. His attempt to prove the falsity of premise 1 is the mission of the entire *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* and is treated in greater depth in the course of subsequent chapters. Here, however, I discuss his concentration on undermining premise 2, which he does by refusing to concede the four-fold division of the premise. Instead, he holds, a given rational indicant may take priority in some instances, while the scriptural indicant may take precedence in others. How is this so? Ibn Taymiyya explains: If two indicants contradict each other—irrespective of whether they are both scriptural, both rational, or one of them scriptural and the other rational—then it must be the case that they are both conclusive (*qaṭʿī*), that they are both inconclusive (*ẓannī*), or that one is conclusive and the other inconclusive.

If both are conclusive, then it is theoretically impossible that they should contradict each other, regardless of whether they are both rational, both scriptural, or one rational and one scriptural. Therefore, it follows that if two conclusive indicants were contradictory or if one of them contradicted what is indicated or established by the other, then this would entail a violation of the law of non-contradiction, which is impossible. Rather, for any two indicants that are thought to be conclusive and that also seem to contradict each other, it must be the case either that one of them is not, in fact, conclusive or that the respective propositions they establish do not, upon closer scrutiny, stand in actual contradiction.

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[60] Ibn Taymiyya's development and discussion of the dichotomy "knowledge vs. conjecture" is located primarily in Arguments 1 (*Darʾ*, 1:86–87), 2 (1:87), 4 (1:134–137), and 5 (1:137). (For the material presented here [p. 156], however, see *Darʾ*, 1:78, line 10 to 1:79, line 11.)

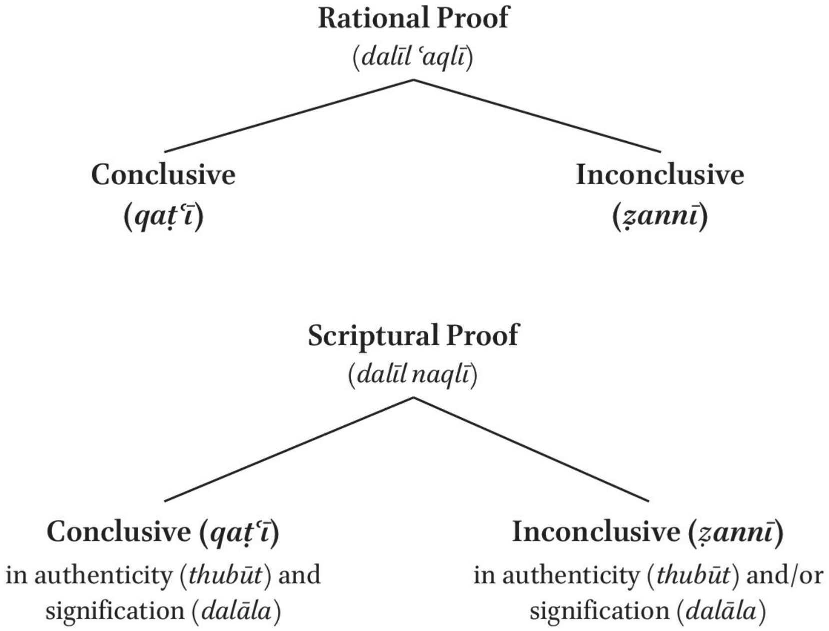
Rational Proof
(*dalīl ʿaqlī*)
Conclusive
(*qaṭʿī*)
Inconclusive
(*ẓannī*)
Scriptural Proof
(*dalīl naqlī*)
Conclusive (*qaṭʿī*)
in authenticity (*thubūt*) and
signification (*dalāla*)
Inconclusive (*ẓannī*)
in authenticity (*thubūt*) and/or
signification (*dalāla*)

FIGURE 3 Both rational and scriptural proofs admit of being conclusive or inconclusive

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya argues, if one of the indicants is conclusive to the exclusion of the other, then all rational persons (*ʿuqalāʾ*) agree by consensus that priority must be given to the *conclusive* indicant irrespective of whether it comes from revelation or from reason, since probability can never override certainty. If both indicants are inconclusive (*ẓannī*), then one must investigate which of them is of greater probative value (*rājiḥ*), then prioritize the stronger one over the weaker one by virtue of its superior evidentiary value—irrespective, once again, of its epistemological origin (whether scriptural or rational).[61] Consequently, it is false to claim that one must give absolute precedence either to the scriptural or to the rational indicant on pain of violating the law of non-contradiction or the law of the excluded middle, for indeed there exists an alternative to the four options mentioned in premise 2 above: namely, that precedence be given to whichever of the two indicants is conclusive or, barring conclusiveness, to whichever enjoys greater probative weight, regardless of whether it is scriptural or rational. This last procedure, Ibn Taymiyya asserts, is the correct one.[62]

The only possible objection to the foregoing rule, Ibn Taymiyya explains, would be to maintain that a scriptural indicant can never be conclusive. Al-Rāzī, it turns out, held just such a position. According to him, it is impossible

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[61] *Darʾ*, 1:79, lines 12–15.

[62] See *Darʾ*, 1:87, lines 5–11 (comprising all of Argument 2) for a statement of this point.

TABLE 4 Predominance (*tarjīḥ*) chart for scriptural and rational proofs on the basis of conclusiveness and inconclusiveness

		Rational proof (*dalīl ʿaqlī*)	
		Conclusive (*qaṭʿī*)	Inconclusive (*ẓannī*)
Scriptural proof (*dalīl naqlī*)	Conclusive (*qaṭʿī*)	Both revelation and reason attest conclusively to one and the same fact.	Conclusive scriptural proof takes precedence over inconclusive rational proof.
	Inconclusive (*ẓannī*)	Conclusive rational proof takes precedence over inconclusive scriptural proof.	The stronger (*rājiḥ*) of the two inconclusive proofs takes precedence over the weaker (*marjūḥ*).

to establish the foundations of theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*) in a conclusive (*qaṭʿī*) manner through textual evidence since reasoning (*istidlāl*) from scripture is dependent on inconclusive (*ẓannī*) factors. Such "inconclusive" factors include, for al-Rāzī, the transmission of the lexicon, syntax, and morphology of the language; verification of the absence of figurative usage (*majāz*), ellipsis (*iḍmār*), homonymy or polysemy (*ishtirāk*), particularization of a general term (*takhṣīṣ*), or transposition of meaning (*naql*); and, beyond such linguistic and hermeneutic concerns, establishing that there exists no valid rational objection (*muʿāriḍ ʿaqlī*) to the obvious sense of the texts (*ẓāhir al-naṣṣ*).[63] Debilitatingly, however, al-Rāzī holds that it is impossible to know that there is no rational objection, since it is always conceivable that there might exist an intrinsically (*fī nafs al-amr*) valid rational objection to what the Qurʾān states that simply has not occurred to the person encountering a given Qurʾānic verse or *ḥadīth*.[64] Ibn Taymiyya informs us that in a work [entitled *Sharḥ awwal al-Muḥaṣṣal*] composed some thirty years before the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, he had responded to al-Rāzī's allegations that arguments deduced from revelation could never be definitive and had established, to the contrary, that such arguments could indeed yield certitude.[65] Be that as it may, al-Rāzī's argument regarding the inconclusiveness of scriptural indicants—quite apart from its invalidity—is of no use, for even if al-Rāzī were right, the indicant given priority (namely, the rational one) would still be privileged on account of its being conclusive, not on account of its being rational or on account of its "grounding" revelation. For those who adhere to the universal rule, by contrast, the primary basis on which they give priority to the rational indicant is its alleged grounding of revelation, a position that does not stand up to scrutiny.[66] Any rational person would agree, moreover, that if a conclusive and an inconclusive indicant contradict, then the conclusive one must be given preference. But demonstrating that a scriptural indicant can never be conclusive, Ibn Taymiyya avers, would be to accomplish the impossible (*dūnahu kharṭ al-qatād*).[67]

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[63] See, e.g., al-Rāzī, *Asās*, 234–235; also al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 24:181 (discussed in El-Tobgui, "Hermeneutics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," 139–140).

[64] See, e.g., al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 116–117; al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 51; al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, 2:251–254; and al-Rāzī, *Maʿālim*, 25.

Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, everyone agrees that certain points of creed—for example, that various acts of worship are obligatory, that various forms of moral license and wrongdoing are prohibited, that the Creator is one, that resurrection after death is real, and so forth—constitute fundamentals that are known of necessity to be part and parcel of the religion (*maʿlūm bi-l-iḍṭirār min al-dīn*). Now, if someone were to claim that a definitive rational proof contradicting one of these matters had been established and that it was therefore necessary to give precedence to this proof on the basis that reason grounds revelation, such a prioritizing of reason would, by universal agreement, be tantamount to belying the Prophet himself and the authenticity of the revelation he transmitted, which amounts to open disbelief. Ibn Taymiyya explains that, in response to this objection, such groups typically appeal to the simple impossibility that there could be a valid rational proof that contradicts matters known to belong to the established fundamentals of the faith. But by this, he reasons further, it becomes clear that it is impossible for anything that has been established by a conclusive (scriptural) proof to be contradicted by a conclusive (rational) proof. Yet many fall into this error: they make assumptions that entail certain consequences and then proceed to affirm these consequences, without realizing that the assumption itself is invalid and that an invalid assumption may indeed entail invalid consequences.[68]

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[65] See *Darʾ*, 1:22, lines 3–6. The work in question—cited in, among others, Ibn Rushayyiq, *Asmāʾ muʾallafāt*, 19 and Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, *ʿUqūd*, 37—is, unfortunately, no longer extant. (See editor's comments at *Darʾ*, 1:22, n. 4.)

[66] *Darʾ*, 1:80, lines 1–5.

[67] *Darʾ*, 1:80, lines 6–7.

Ibn Taymiyya also drives two related arguments on the basis of an issue that is common in legal discussions of the texts of revelation (Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*): namely, the issue of the authenticity, reliability, or integrity (*thubūt*) of the texts, on the one hand, and that of their meaning or signification (*dalāla*), on the other.[69] According to the first of these two arguments,[70] either a person possesses *knowledge* (based on reason) that the Prophet's mission was authentic and, consequently, that what was revealed to him is factual and true in and of itself (*thubūt mā akhbara bihi fī nafs al-amr*), or he does not. If he does not possess knowledge (that is, certain knowledge) that revelation is authentic, then there can be no bona fide conflict between anything revelation asserts and any rational conclusion that he knows (i.e., with certainty) to be true. In such a scenario, the rational conclusion known with certainty would take precedence over anything asserted in a source (in this case, revelation) that is not known with certainty to be trustworthy and authentic. And if the rational proposition in question is also not known (that is, known with certainty to be true), then there cannot, a fortiori, be a conflict in this case either, since it is impossible for two unknowns to contradict each other. In short, if the mind knows (a) that revelation is indubitably authentic and (b) that revelation has affirmed (*akhbara bi*) a proposition *p*, then knowledge of the factual truth (*thubūt*) of *p* is entailed necessarily by the combination of (a) and (b), just as other known propositions are entailed necessarily by a combination of their premises if these latter be true.[71]

Ibn Taymiyya goes on to spell out the implications of someone saying, "Do not believe in the factual truth of what revelation has informed you of since your believing so is incompatible with (*yunāfī*) that by which you have come to know of its veracity [namely, reason]."[72] In fact, Ibn Taymiyya remarks, what is definitively incompatible with reason (i.e., that reason which has led to knowledge of the truth of revelation) is the notion that one should, while accepting revelation as true and authentic, feel free to belie any of the specific propositions contained therein. This would eventually undermine our confidence in anything revelation may assert, since if it is possible for revelation to err in a given instance, then it is surely possible for it to err in other, innumerable instances as well.[73] The result of all this is that people who approach the texts in such a manner do not gain any knowledge from them about the attributes of God known through revelation (*ṣifāt khabariyya*) or about the day of judgement. This is so because they believe that such statements contain some elements that ought to be accepted at face value and other elements whose obvious meanings are inapplicable and, consequently, subject to figurative interpretation through *taʾwīl*. Yet they have no rule or principle from revelation itself by which to make the crucial distinction between those elements that are meant literally and those that are intended in a figurative sense.[74]

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[68] "*al-taqdīr al-mumtaniʿ qad yalzamuhu lawāzim mumtaniʿa*." *Darʾ*, 1:81, lines 1–2. For this argument overall, see *Darʾ*, 1:80, line 6 to 1:81, line 3.

[69] See figure 3, p. 157 above.

[70] Argument 4 (*Darʾ*, 1:134–137).

[71] See *Darʾ*, 1:134, lines 1–9.

[72] *Darʾ*, 1:134, lines 10–11. For the larger argument, see *Darʾ*, 1:134, line 10 to 1:135, line 8.

If, indeed, it is inconceivable that what a prophet asserts by way of revelation should contravene reason, Ibn Taymiyya continues, then this would amount to an admission that it is, in fact, impossible for scriptural and rational indicants to contradict each other. Someone might then argue that what is really meant is that it is impossible for there to be a contradiction between reason and something that is not a scriptural indicant at all (though it is erroneously thought to be) or between reason and a scriptural indicant that is inconclusive (*ẓannī*), either on the level of its chain of transmission (*isnād*) (in the event, say, of a mendacious or inaccurate narrator in the chain) or on the level of its content (*matn*) (in the event, say, of an equivocal term in the text). In this case, the response would be that if the term "scriptural indicant" is applied to what does not actually constitute a (reliable) proof in and of itself (*mā laysa bi-dalīl fī nafs al-amr*), then it could likewise be the case that some of what have been called "rational indicants" but that contradict revelation could, mutatis mutandis, also turn out, upon closer inspection, not to constitute a proof in and of itself (*fī nafs al-amr*). In this case, if such proofs, touted as apodictic and rationally conclusive[75] though they be merely conjectural, were to contradict a scriptural indicant whose premises are both valid and well known, then it would be incumbent to give priority to the scriptural indicant over the rational one—by virtue, once again, of its superior epistemic warrant, not on account of its origin in the category of statements collectively referred to as "revelation."

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[73] See *Darʾ*, 1:135, lines 9–13.

[74] It is important to note here that many thinkers did, in fact, propose certain texts of revelation as containing directions to carry out precisely this type of rational weighing of reality and the figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of revelation accordingly. Perhaps this is most obviously the case with Ibn Rushd, but it is also assumed, perhaps to a lesser degree, by a number of theologians as well. (We recall, for instance, al-Ghazālī's discussion, in *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*, of the *mīzān* mentioned in the Qurʾān as being equivalent to the various figures of Aristotelian syllogistic inference.) See al-Ghazālī, *al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*, 41–46. Al-Ghazālī's *Qisṭās* has been translated into French by Chelhot, "«al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm»," and into English, as *The Just Balance* (*al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm*), by D.P. Brewster.

[75] Roughly paraphrasing "*barāhīn ʿaqliyya*" and "*qawāṭiʿ ʿaqliyya*." *Darʾ*, 1:136, line 15.

It is thus manifest, Ibn Taymiyya concludes, that whatever explanation is given for one category of indicants—scriptural or rational—enjoying automatic preponderance, it is possible to reverse this explanation and apply it in an equivalent manner to the other category as well. It is therefore invalid to accord automatic priority to an entire category of indicant over another. Rather, one must investigate the two specific pieces of evidence found to be in contradiction on a particular point and give precedence to whichever one is conclusive (*qaṭʿī*) or, if neither is fully conclusive, then to whichever one is of greater probative value (*rājiḥ*), irrespective of whether the indicant thus preferred be the scriptural or the rational one. In this manner, the fallacious principle that has served as a means for various forms of heterodoxy is vitiated.[76]

The previous argument revolved around the question whether revelation is known to be authentic, that is, a question of textual integrity, or *thubūt*. Ibn Taymiyya now completes this series of arguments[77] by starting from the assumption that the authenticity (*thubūt*) of revelation is known, then considering the question of signification, or *dalāla*—that is, whether revelation can be established to have definitively addressed the issue in which a conflict with reason is alleged. Assuming revelation to be authentic, we are faced with one of three scenarios: (1) revelation is known to affirm the issue under debate, (2) it is merely conjectured to affirm it, or (3) it is neither known nor conjectured to affirm the issue at hand. Now, if it is known that revelation has affirmed the matter, then it is impossible for there to be anything in reason that would contradict or be incompatible with (*yunāfī*) what is known to be the case (whether known through revelation or by any other means), for if something is known either to be true or not to be true, either to exist (*thubūt*) or not to exist (*intifāʾ*), then it is not possible that a proof be established that would contradict this. If, on the other hand, something is only conjectured to be the case on the basis of revelation, then it *is* possible for something in reason to contradict it, in which case it is incumbent, once again, to give priority to knowledge over conjecture—*not* on account of its being rational rather than scriptural but on account of its being knowledge, just as it would be incumbent to give priority to what is known by revelation over what is merely conjectured to be the case by reason. If the rational indicant itself is merely conjectural, falling short of conclusive certainty, and if the two indicants are of equivalent probative value, then the matter remains irresolvable; otherwise, priority is given to the one that enjoys the greater epistemic warrant. And if revelation contains nothing that can be considered knowledge, or even mere conjecture, on the point in question, then there is nothing in it for reason to contradict with in the first place. This proves once again, for Ibn Taymiyya, that according automatic priority to reason (or even to revelation) in all circumstances is both misguided and rationally indefensible.[78]

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[76] See *Darʾ*, 1:136, line 5 to 1:137, line 8 for this and the preceding paragraph.

[77] See Argument 5 (*Darʾ*, 1:137).

In conclusion, then, Ibn Taymiyya seeks to replace the binary "reason vs. revelation" with the alternative binary "certainty vs. probability." He does so by arguing that individual arguments based either on what is considered reason or on what is considered authentic scripture run the entire scale of epistemic value from "certain" to "fallacious" and that, therefore, precedence must be accorded, in each case, to whichever argument enjoys greater probative weight, regardless from which of the two sources of knowledge, reason or revelation, it comes to us. Once Ibn Taymiyya has, in essence, equated the two sources—reason and revelation—epistemically while simultaneously subjecting each discrete element of both categories to a common test of probative value, he completes this second maneuver against the universal rule by declaring that the issue is not, as everyone seems to have assumed, one of reason versus revelation but rather one of knowledge versus conjecture, certainty versus probability, more probative versus less probative indicators of truth. Taken together, Arguments 1 through 5—addressing what it means for reason to "ground" revelation and establishing the crucial binary "certainty vs. probability" over against the inherited dichotomy "reason vs. revelation"—aim to undermine the main premises upon which the universal rule is predicated.

7 Not "Scriptural vs. Rational" but "Scripturally Validated vs. Innovated"

Ibn Taymiyya's insistence that the relevant distinction to be made is between knowledge and conjecture rather than between reason (as a category) and revelation (as a category) has immediate implications for the epistemological status, as well as the religious-moral evaluation, of various arguments and proofs. In Argument 15,[79] Ibn Taymiyya elaborates a fundamental distinction through

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[78] *Darʾ*, 1:137, lines 9–18 (comprising all of Argument 5).

[79] See *Darʾ*, 1:198–200 for Argument 15 and the full presentation of Ibn Taymiyya's novel binary "*sharʿī* vs. *bidʿī*" in place of the more usual dichotomy "*sharʿī* vs. *ʿaqlī*" (or "scriptural vs. rational").

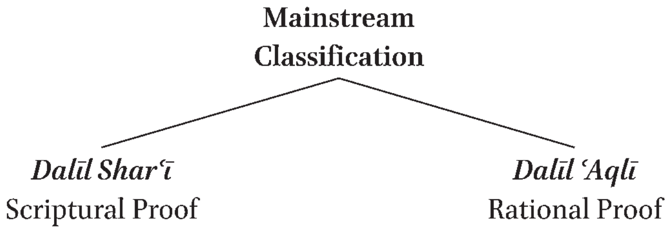

FIGURE 4 Mainstream classification of proofs as scriptural (*sharʿī*) vs. rational (*ʿaqlī*)

which he seeks to shift the entire frame of reference in the debate concerning reason and revelation. He proposes that the real issue is not a question of "scriptural" versus "rational" (that is, *sharʿī* as opposed to *ʿaqlī*) proofs and methods, as scholars had framed the debate up until his time. Rather, he tells us, the fundamental distinction to be made is between "scripturally validated" versus "innovated" (that is, *sharʿī* as opposed to *bidʿī*) proofs and methods. Scripturally validated proofs, in turn, comprise both revealed (*samʿī*) and rational (*ʿaqlī*) indicants. For Ibn Taymiyya, the *sharʿī–bidʿī* binary is based on the premise that an indicant's classification as "scriptural" or "rational" is not, in and of itself, a property that entails praise or blame, validity or invalidity. Rather, this only reveals the epistemological avenue—reason or revelation—through which an alleged piece of knowledge has come to us (although when revelation is the source, reason must also be used in order to understand it).[80]

Ibn Taymiyya's reclassification of indicants and proofs results in a new binary that is no less than fundamental to his thought and methodology. According to this new classification, the converse of a scriptural (*sharʿī*) proof is not a rational one but an innovated (*bidʿī*) one, for it is innovation (*bidʿa*) rather than reason that stands opposite revealed religion (*shirʿa*).[81] The word *sharʿī* in Ibn Taymiyya's new schema is thus no longer simply a synonym of *samʿī* (referring, in the religious context, to that which we know only through revelation) but comes to mean something like "scripturally validated" or "scripturally confirmed," in other words, valid and true and vouched for as such by revelation. Being scripturally validated (*sharʿī*) is a positive attribute of an indicant or proof, whereas being innovated (*bidʿī*)—not in the sense merely of being new but of lacking scriptural validation—is a negative qualification,

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[80] Ibn Taymiyya seems to imply that this is necessary in order to determine that something is a part of authentic revelation and, having done so, properly to understand the import thereof. In other words, reason is employed in the determination both of the reliability and authenticity (*thubūt*) of the revealed texts and of their signification (*dalāla*) or meaning, as we have discussed in the preceding section.

[81] "*idh al-bidʿa tuqābilu al-shirʿa*." *Darʾ*, 1:198, line 6.

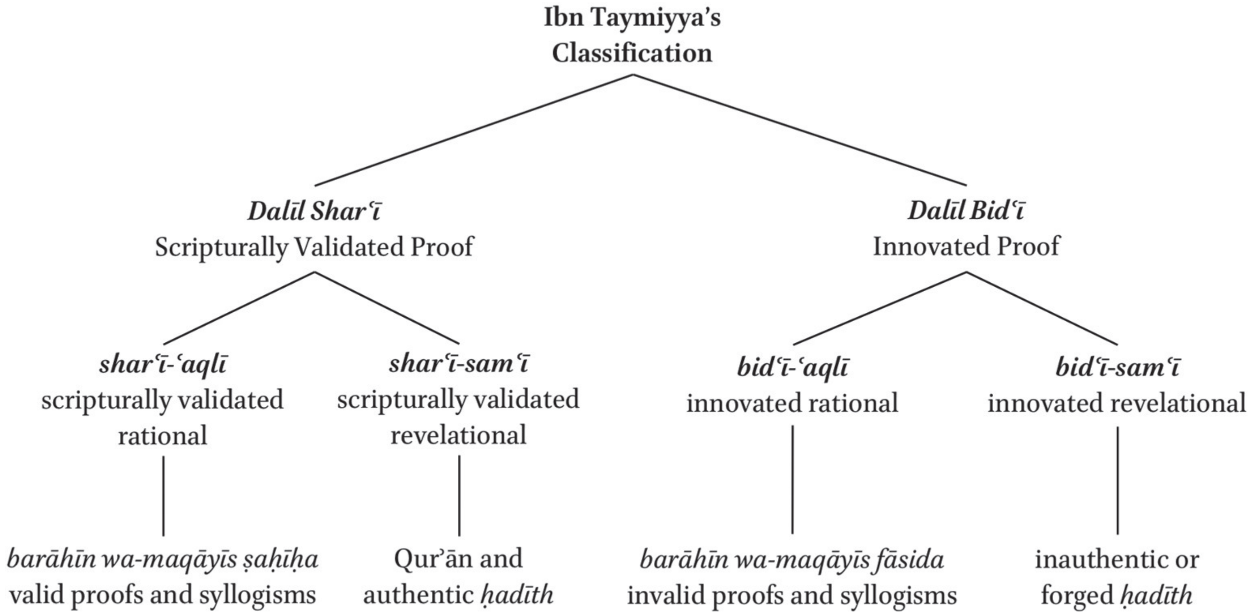
Ibn Taymiyya's Classification
Dalīl Sharʿī
Scripturally Validated Proof
Dalīl Bidʿī
Innovated Proof
sharʿī-ʿaqlī
scripturally validated rational
sharʿī-samʿī
scripturally validated revelational
bidʿī-ʿaqlī
innovated rational
bidʿī-samʿī
innovated revelational
barāhīn wa-maqāyīs ṣaḥīḥa
valid proofs and syllogisms
Qurʾān and authentic *ḥadīth*
barāhīn wa-maqāyīs fāsida
invalid proofs and syllogisms
inauthentic or forged *ḥadīth*

FIGURE 5 Ibn Taymiyya's classification of proofs as scripturally validated (*sharʿī*) vs. innovated (*bidʿī*)

for whatever stands opposed to authentic scriptural religion (*sharīʿa*) is, of necessity, invalid and false. A scripturally validated indicant, in turn, may consist of either a revealed text or a conclusion reached through reason, for a proof's being scripturally validated can mean one of two things: either (1) that revelation has positively affirmed and explicitly indicated it (*kawn al-sharʿ athbatahu wa-dalla ʿalayhi*) or (2) that revelation has permitted it and declared it valid and licit (*kawn al-sharʿ abāḥahu wa-adhina fīhi*).[82] Scriptural validation, in other words, can come about either by way of affirmation from the *sharʿ* (revelation) or by way of revelation's approbation and approval.

If one uses "scriptural" (*sharʿī*) according to the first meaning—namely, that which scripture has positively affirmed and indicated—then it is possible that the indicant or proof in question is also knowable through the use of reason, with the role of scripture being to point it out (*dalla ʿalayhi*) and call attention to it (*nabbaha ʿalayhi*). In this case, the indicant is classified as a "scripturally validated rational" (*sharʿī-ʿaqlī*) indicant. As examples of scripturally validated rational indicants, Ibn Taymiyya cites the various parables (*amthāl*) mentioned in the Qurʾān, arguments for the oneness of God and the authenticity of the Prophet Muḥammad, the affirmation of God's attributes, and similar matters. All these are proofs whose truth is known by reason, as they consist of rational demonstrations and syllogisms (*barāhīn wa-maqāyīs ʿaqliyya*), yet they are also classified as scripturally validated by virtue of being mentioned and explicitly affirmed in the Qurʾān. If, by contrast, a given indicant is known exclusively by way of the revealed texts, then it is classified as a "scripturally validated revealed" (*sharʿī-samʿī*) indicant. Such indicants would include, for instance, proof texts adduced from the Qurʾān or *ḥadīth* to establish the reality of events like the day of judgement or other such matters that we can know about only through revelation. In sum, all valid indicants may be categorized as either scripturally validated and rational (*sharʿī-ʿaqlī*) or scripturally validated and revealed (*sharʿī-samʿī*).

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[82] See *Darʾ*, 1:198, lines 3–9.

Many *kalām* theologians, Ibn Taymiyya insists, have made the error of presuming that the category of scriptural indicants consists exclusively of this second type (namely, *sharʿī-samʿī* indicants that can be known only through the texts of revelation and not through reason) and that revelation functions as an indicant (*dalīl*) only in this manner, that is, purely by informing us of matters about which we could otherwise have no knowledge. For this reason, they separate the foundations of theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*) into two categories—rational and scriptural—and define the rational strictly as that which is not, and cannot be, known by way of revelation (and, conversely, define the scriptural strictly as that which is not, and cannot be, known through reason). Yet Ibn Taymiyya insists that this is an error, for the Qurʾān itself uses, indicates, and draws attention to rational proofs. Indeed, some things classified as rational proofs can be inferred by reason on the basis of empirical evidence,[83] as the Qurʾān itself indicates in verses such as "We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth" (Q. *Fuṣṣilat* 41:53). The purpose of such a verse, for Ibn Taymiyya, is to advance a rational argument for the existence of God based on the existence and contingent nature of the empirical world around us.[84]

If, however, we use the term "scriptural" or "scripturally validated" (*sharʿī*) according to the second meaning mentioned above (namely, what scripture has permitted and deemed licit but has not itself positively affirmed or established), then this category, according to Ibn Taymiyya, is divided into several subcategories: (1) that which has reached us of the authenticated prophetic Sunna, (2) that which the Qurʾān has indicated and drawn attention to in terms of rational proofs and arguments, and finally (3) that which can be inferred on the basis of our empirical observation of existent things (*mā dallat ʿalayhi wa-*

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[83] "*wa-in kāna min al-adilla al-ʿaqliyya mā yuʿlamu bi-l-ʿiyān wa-lawāzimihi.*" *Darʾ*, 1:199, lines 9–10.

[84] See *Darʾ*, 1:198, line 9 to 1:199, line 12 for this and the preceding paragraph.

shahidat bihi al-mawjūdāt)—this last subcategory effectively elevating empirical observation to the category of *sharʿī*, or scripturally validated, evidence as well.[85]

To summarize, an indicant that is scripturally validated (*dalīl sharʿī*) cannot be contradicted by or subordinated to one that is not scripturally validated (*ghayr sharʿī*). As for indicants that are rational (*ʿaqlī*) or have the nature of a transmitted report (*samʿī*) but that are not specifically validated by revelation (*sharʿī*),[86] such indicants may sometimes outweigh and sometimes be outweighed by countervailing evidence, sometimes be valid and sometimes invalid.[87] Finally, statements of authentic revelation, both declarative and imperative, cannot be overridden or contradicted (*yuʿāraḍ*) by anything. Unfortunately, however, Ibn Taymiyya laments, some include in the category of scriptural proofs and indicants (*adilla sharʿiyya*) that which does not belong to it, while others exclude from it that which is, in fact, a proper subcategory of it. This subcategory, we may assume, includes scripturally validated rational (*sharʿī-ʿaqlī*) arguments—an important category of *sharʿī* indicants that Ibn Taymiyya blames the *mutakallimūn* for having made the fundamental error of excluding from the category of scriptural proofs.[88]

In conclusion, Ibn Taymiyya completes his redefinition of the terms of the debate on reason and revelation by proposing a third conceptual shift, namely, that indicants and proofs are not diametrically opposed in terms of being "scriptural" (*sharʿī*) versus "rational" (*ʿaqlī*) but rather in terms of being "scripturally validated" (*sharʿī*) versus "innovated" (*bidʿī*). The category of scripturally validated proofs comprises both the authentic texts of revelation, properly comprehended, and valid rational arguments built on sound premises. Ibn Taymiyya thus divides what passes for "reason" into two categories, valid/true and invalid/false, and absorbs that which is valid[89] into the larger umbrella category of *sharʿī*, or scripturally validated, proofs. By rigorously insisting on the epistemic quality of a proof or piece of evidence to the exclusion of all other considerations, including whether the proof or evidence originates in reason or in revelation, Ibn Taymiyya attempts to circumvent the rigid categories of “reason” (taken as a whole) and “revelation” (taken as a whole) by subjecting each individual element of *both* categories to a common test of epistemic warrant, then asserting that revelation legitimates and endorses everything that is true and certain and abjures everything that is false and unfounded—regardless, once again, of whether it originates in reason or in what is claimed to be divine revelation.

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[85] See *Darʾ*, 1:199, lines 13–14.

[86] Such as, for example, a historical or other sort of "report" or piece of information that is neither affirmed, nor denied, nor addressed by revelation in any way.

[87] As in the case of rational arguments containing false premises or built on invalid inferences, or in the case of *ḥadīth* texts transmitted as putative revelation but found, upon investigation, to be inauthentic.

[88] See *Darʾ*, 1:200, lines 13–18.

[89] Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of what exactly constitutes valid and invalid reasoning and rational proofs deserves a separate study and cannot be taken up in detail here.

In summary, we have seen in sections 5, 6, and 7 above that Ibn Taymiyya makes three fundamental moves in his refutation of the universal rule. First, he demolishes the fixed categories of “revelation” and “reason” by placing all the discrete elements of both on an equal footing. Second, he insists that each element, whether from reason or from revelation, be individually investigated for its probative value, thus replacing the binary “reason vs. revelation” (*ʿaql–naql*) with the binary “certainty (‘knowledge’) vs. probability” (*ʿilm–ẓann*)—and, in the case of probabilistic (*ẓannī*) matters, the further sub-binary of “more probative vs. less probative” (*rājiḥ–marjūḥ*) indicators of knowledge and truth. Finally, he subsumes valid rational arguments based on sound premises under the larger category of “scripturally validated” (*sharʿī*) proofs, placing them into a new category he terms “scripturally validated rational” (*sharʿī-ʿaqlī*), the counterpart of the “scripturally validated revealed” (*sharʿī-samʿī*). By these three maneuvers, Ibn Taymiyya seeks to demolish the universal rule altogether and to redefine the very terms of the debate surrounding reason and revelation in Islam. He accomplishes this tour de force first by poking holes in all the major assumptions that form the basis of the universal rule, then by redefining the very categories in terms of which the question of reason and revelation had been conceived and debated up to his time.

8 Further Arguments Regarding the Rational Contradictoriness of the Universal Rule[90]

In this section, I present a number of disparate arguments Ibn Taymiyya advances against the universal rule. The majority of these arguments are composed of succinct statements that, taken together with the arguments discussed in section 9, provide an overview of the nature and content of nearly half Ibn Taymiyya's thirty-eight arguments against the universal rule. In the paragraphs that follow, I present Arguments 11 through 14, as well as parts of Arguments 8 and 21.

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[90] Based on Arguments 8 (*Darʾ*, 1:148–156), 10 (1:170–192), 11 (1:192–194), 13 (1:195), 14 (1:195–198), 21 (5:204–209), and parts of Argument 29 (5:268–286). Arguments 28 (*Darʾ*, 5:242–268), 31–35 (5:289–320, 5:320–338, 5:338–340, 5:340–343, and 5:343–345, respectively), 37 (5:357–358), 39 (5:363–370), and 42 (5:387–392) also belong to this group.

In Argument 8,[91] Ibn Taymiyya asserts that the majority of issues allegedly involving a contradiction between reason and revelation are recondite and ambiguous matters that perplex even many of the rationalists themselves—issues such as God's names, attributes, and actions, the ontological reality of otherworldly reward and punishment, God's throne (*ʿarsh*) and footstool (*kursī*), and other such matters pertaining to the unseen. Most people who have ventured into such territory on the basis of mere opinion derived from their own rational reflection either end up in dispute and disagreement with one another or remain at a loss and perplexed (*mutahawwikūn*).[92]

Ibn Taymiyya makes the further point that most of these thinkers defer without qualification to the main figures of their particular school of thought, even when their own reflections sometimes lead them to different conclusions. Among the followers of Aristotle, for example, many come to different conclusions from their master in the fields of logic, physics, and metaphysics,[93] yet they refrain from opposing Aristotle's doctrine and attribute the fact that their conclusions differ from his to their own mental deficiency and lack of understanding.[94] This, remarks Ibn Taymiyya, in spite of the fact that

> the people of intellect who are endowed with pure reason (*ahl al-ʿaql al-muttaṣifūna bi-ṣarīḥ al-ʿaql*) know that the science of logic, for instance, contains much that is patently and indubitably erroneous, as has been mentioned elsewhere. As for what he [Aristotle] and his followers—such as Alexander of Aphrodisias [fl. ca. 200 CE], Proclus [d. 485 CE], Themistius [d. 387 CE], al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl, Ibn Rushd (the grandson), and others—have said in the realm of metaphysics (*ilāhiyyāt*), this contains such great error and enormous deficiency as are clear to the generality of rational human beings (*jumhūr ʿuqalāʾ banī Ādam*). Indeed, their discourse is beset by well-nigh incalculable contradictions.[95]

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[91] *Darʾ*, 1:148–156.

[92] *Darʾ*, 1:151, lines 5–10.

[93] Ibn Taymiyya often cites pre-Islamic thinkers, both Greek and Hellenistic, who disagreed with Aristotle's logic and larger philosophy, either in whole or in part. See von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik," 176–179.

[94] *Darʾ*, 1:151, lines 13–16.

[95] *Darʾ*, 1:151, line 16 to 1:152, line 4. (See index of Arabic passages.)

This same attitude of excessive deference to authority can be observed among the followers of all the major schools of Muslim thought as well, from the major Muʿtazilī theologians to those who are "closer to the Sunna," from the Ashʿarīs, Kullābīs, and Karrāmiyya to the followers of the Four Imams and the leading ascetics and early Sufi figures.[96] Ibn Taymiyya contends that not only do many of their doctrines contain much that contradicts the Qurʾān, the Sunna, and the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the community, but they also contain numerous positions that contradict pure reason. Yet none of the followers of these various authorities would give unconditional priority to his own conclusions over that of his revered leader. How then, Ibn Taymiyya asks, can anyone claim that authentic revelation contains elements that every common man knows through his reason to be false and that each man should thus give precedence to his own opinion over revelation—despite his awareness of the deficiency of his own intellect and the confusion into which adherents of his school and contending schools have fallen with regard to such matters? Yet all groups claim to know that revelation is true, and what is *known* to be true cannot legitimately be opposed by what is ambiguous and confused and is thus, by contrast, not known to be true.[97]

Argument 11[98] holds that much of what people refer to as proofs (*adilla*)—whether rational or scriptural—does not, in fact, constitute proof but is something they only surmise to constitute proof. Everyone, from the Companions to the later rationalists (affirmationists and negationists alike), agrees that the texts of revelation affirm (*tadullu ʿalā*) the divine names and attributes, details pertaining to the hereafter, and the like. The dispute arises only with regard to whether there is anything in reason that dictates that the texts ought to be read as conveying a "true" non-literal or metaphorical meaning that differs from what a straightforward exegesis of them would suggest. However, there is vast disagreement among rationalist thinkers on the question of what constitutes valid rational knowledge. Thus, something that is known and agreed upon—namely, the straightforward meaning or signification (*dalāla*) of the revealed texts—cannot legitimately be opposed by putative conclusions of reason that are subject to so much dispute and uncertainty. Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyya remarks in conclusion, the people of truth do not impugn rational arguments or proofs (*adilla ʿaqliyya*) as a category nor that which reason knows to be valid; rather, they reject only what their opponents claim to be in contradiction with revelation. Yet with respect to all such claims, he asserts, not one of them is supported by an intrinsically valid argument (*dalīl ṣaḥīḥ fī nafs al-amr*),[99] nor by an argument that is accepted by the generality of rational persons (*ʿāmmat al-ʿuqalāʾ*), nor yet by an argument that has not been undermined and refuted by reason itself.

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[96] See *Darʾ*, 1:153, line 6 to 1:155, line 2. Among those who are "closer to the Sunna" he mentions al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Najjār (d. ca. 220/835) and Ḍirār b. ʿAmr (d. ca. 200/815), whose followers include Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā Burghūth (d. 240/854 or 241/855), "who debated Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal," and Ḥafṣ al-Fard (fl. ca. 200/815), "who debated al-Shāfiʿī" (see *Darʾ*, 1:153, line 6 to 1:154, line 2).

[97] See *Darʾ*, 1:151, lines 2–3 and 1:155, lines 2–13.

[98] *Darʾ*, 1:192–194.

Argument 12[100] holds that all the conclusions of reason that allegedly contradict revelation can be demonstrated by reason itself to be invalid. Now, what is known by reason to be invalid cannot be used to oppose other conclusions similarly derived from reason or to oppose revelation. This is a general principle that Ibn Taymiyya promises to substantiate in detail when he turns to the specific arguments propounded by those who contravene orthodox belief ("the Sunna"), arguments whose specious and contradictory nature he says he will demonstrate on the basis of reason itself.

According to Argument 13,[101] those elements of revelation that are claimed to contradict rational evidence—elements such as affirmation of the divine attributes, the details of the hereafter, and the like—are known of necessity to be part and parcel of the religion of Islam (*maʿlūm bi-l-iḍṭirār min dīn al-Islām*).[102] Thus, it is incoherent for one to hold any of these matters to be false once one has accepted the truthfulness of the Prophet and the concomitant authenticity of the revelation he brought.

In Argument 14,[103] Ibn Taymiyya contends that not only the words but also the meanings of the Qurʾān, as well as the intentions and objectives of the Prophet (*maqāṣiduhu wa-murāduhu*), have been transmitted in the same recurrent (*mutawātir*) fashion as the Qurʾānic text, the obligatory nature of the five daily prayers, the obligation to fast during Ramadan, and similar well-known and undisputed matters. Some of these elements are *mutawātir* among both scholars and the general public, while other, more specialized elements are *mutawātir* only among the experts of Qurʾānic exegesis and the prophetic Sunna. Yet other, even less commonly circulated elements are known exclusively to particular individuals and may even be deemed suspect (*maẓnūn*) or fabricated (*makdhūb*) by those lacking the requisite knowledge to assess them. According to Ibn Taymiyya, this principle holds in all the various disciplines, such as Qurʾānic exegesis, *ḥadīth* criticism, grammar, medicine, law, and discursive theology. From an epistemological point of view, recurrent transmission of the *mutawātir* type yields knowledge that is certain and, therefore, not subject to refutation. Thus, any claim about the content of revelation (concerning, for instance, the meanings of the Qurʾān or the intentions and objectives of the Prophet as known through his Sunna) that contradicts what the scholars most intimately familiar with these sources know to be true would, of necessity, be a false claim.

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[99] *Darʾ*, 1:192, lines 6–7.

[100] *Darʾ*, 1:194.

[101] *Darʾ*, 1:195.

[102] *Darʾ*, 1:195, line 3.

[103] *Darʾ*, 1:195–198.

Argument 21,[104] which is less an argument than an assertion, affirms the premise that it is impossible for two declarative statements of revelation to contradict each other, though it may be the case that one explains or elucidates the meaning of the other. This contrasts with the case of contradictory imperative statements, whereby one may have been abrogated and superseded by another. Ibn Taymiyya insists, however, that only revelation (and not, we are to understand, reason) may abrogate revelation. Whoever seeks to abrogate any aspect of the religion on the basis of his own whims and opinions is guilty of heresy (*ilḥād*), just like someone who rejects or relativizes the declarative statements of revelation by making their interpretation subject to the fruits of his own (unfounded) speculation. Ibn Taymiyya accuses the Qarāmiṭa (seemingly a reference to the Ismāʿīlīs) of engaging in both such abrogation and speculation, and he excoriates other heretics (*malāḥida*) for going so far as to claim prophethood for themselves or a station they consider even higher than prophethood (he is referring here to the philosophical enterprise, by which many of the philosophers claim access to a truth higher than that purveyed by revealed religion).[105] Ibn Taymiyya concludes that opposing revelation on the basis of mere opinion is one of the paths that lead to disbelief (*min shuʿab al-kufr*), even if the one who does so firmly believes in all the teachings of revelation other than those he claims to be contradicted by his rational conclusions. If revelation is true, then all arguments that lead to a contradiction with any part of it are, by necessity, invalid and false.

9 On the Incompatibility of the Universal Rule with the Status and Authority of Revelation

A large majority of Ibn Taymiyya's arguments against the universal rule, as we have seen above, take the form of rational critiques of its coherence and logical implications and are meant to demonstrate that the rule as formulated does not hold up on logical grounds. A number of arguments, however, consider the implications of the universal rule through the lens of revelation and within the larger religious context of the Islamic faith. These arguments leave aside the question of the logical and rational viability of the rule on its own terms and focus instead on the extent to which Ibn Taymiyya considers the rule to cohere (or not) with the overall epistemological structure of Islam, in the name of which he launches his massive critique and seeks to redress the troubled relationship between reason and revelation that he inherited. In the current section, we examine the main arguments Ibn Taymiyya makes in relation to the compatibility of the universal rule with Islamic revelation.

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[104] *Darʾ*, 5:204–209.

[105] See *Darʾ*, 5:208, lines 10–16.

As part of Argument 3,[106] Ibn Taymiyya contends that anyone who has the slightest familiarity with the content of the message brought by the Prophet Muḥammad knows necessarily (*bi-l-iḍṭirār*) that he did not call people to faith by arguing from accidents or the negation of attributes or by teaching that the Creator was neither above the world nor distinct from it, neither inside the world nor outside it. Similarly, the Prophet made no mention of the negation of "body" in the technical, philosophical sense of the term, nor of the impossibility of a past or future infinite regress, nor of other such doctrines held by the philosophers and *mutakallimūn*. Not only did he not endorse such teachings explicitly, but he also made no mention of anything that could plausibly be construed to imply or entail any of this. In fact, our knowledge that the Prophet did not address such matters is even more patent and obvious than our knowledge of a host of other details about his life as related in the books of Sunna, details such as the fact that he made the pilgrimage only once after the Hijra or that he never prayed the five obligatory prayers alone but always in a group. Yet if anyone tried to pass off falsified *ḥadīth* reports or deduce rational arguments to the contrary, then the scholars who are intimately familiar with the texts and who know the truth of these matters in a necessary fashion (*ʿilman ḍarūriyyan*) would immediately recognize the falsehood of such claims, just as they would recognize the necessary falsehood of sophistical arguments even before resolving the specific points of doubt raised by such arguments. Hence, if anyone were to employ such rational methods of argumentation or publicly endorse the position of negationism (*nafy*) with regard to the divine attributes, then the necessary falsehood of his position would be even more blatant than the falsehood of one who claimed something contrary to any of the issues mentioned above relating to the (lesser-known aspects of the) Prophet's daily practice. This is known, Ibn Taymiyya concludes, by anyone with even the slightest knowledge of the conditions of the Prophet's life, let alone those with an intermediate level of knowledge, to say nothing of those who are the heirs of the Prophet,[107] namely, the scholars who possess comprehensive knowledge of his words and deeds.[108]

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[106] *Darʾ*, 1:87–133.

As part of Argument 15,[109] Ibn Taymiyya maintains that God, the Author of revelation, has prohibited the use of false arguments (such as an argument based on a faulty premise) just as He has forbidden falsehood and lying in general, not least with regard to Himself. This prohibition is indicated by the Qurʾānic verse "Was not the covenant of the Book taken from them that they would ascribe naught to God but the truth?" (Q. *al-Aʿrāf* 7:169). God has also forbidden the use of arguments by one who seeks to use them without knowledge, as we read in verses such as Q. *al-Isrāʾ* 17:36: "And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge," or Q. *al-Aʿrāf* 7:33: "that you say of God that which you know not," or Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:66: "Behold! You are those who dispute concerning that whereof you have knowledge; so why do you dispute concerning that whereof you have no knowledge?" Finally, God has forbidden the use of arguments merely for the purpose of disputation after the truth of a matter has been clarified, as indicated in the verse "They dispute with you (O Muḥammad) concerning the truth after it was made manifest" (Q. *al-Anfāl* 8:6), as well as the verse "And those who disbelieve dispute with vain argument in order to confute therewith the truth" (Q. *al-Kahf* 18:56). The implication here is clear: Ibn Taymiyya interprets these verses, originally addressed to the Meccan pagans, as applying also to later philosophers and theologians, whose premises and arguments he considers specious and ill-founded. He therefore considers them to be "saying of God that which they know not" on the basis of "vain argument" and to be disputing with one another "concerning the truth after it was made manifest" (i.e., in the clear language of the Qurʾān and Sunna). In doing so, he charges, they weaken and undermine, rather than strengthen and reinforce, the truths plainly revealed to mankind on the tongue of God's final messenger.[110]

As part of Argument 21,[111] Ibn Taymiyya asserts that privileging the rational opinions of men above revelation is tantamount to belying the prophets, which opens the door to disbelief. He paraphrases the beginning of al-Shahrastānī's famous heresiographical work, *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, to the effect that the root of every evil lies in opposing revelation with mere opinion and putting one's own biases and whims above the revealed texts.[112] Ibn Taymiyya then cites five fairly lengthy Qurʾānic passages in support of this notion.[113] He explains that revelation is divided into two types of speech: imperative (*inshāʾī*) and declarative (*ikhbārī*). The key to felicity and success consists in believing wholeheartedly in the declarative statements and obeying unreservedly the imperative ones, while the key to misery lies in opposing both with one's own opinion (*raʾy*) and biased whim (*hawā*) and giving priority to these opinions and whims over the declarative and imperative dictates of revelation. According to Ibn Taymiyya, those theologians and rationalists who strayed did so with respect to the declarative part of revelation by opposing, on the basis of their own reasoning and opinions, that which God has declared in revelation regarding Himself and His creation. By contrast, the ascetics (*ahl al-ʿibāda*) and legal scholars who strayed did so with respect to the imperative parts of revelation by opposing God's command and following their own "*sharīʿa*" based on their personal whims and opinions. Ibn Taymiyya's main point is that opposing revelation in either of these two domains (declarative or imperative) is the mark of a disbeliever, not a believer. This fact is established by several Qurʾānic verses,[114] as well as by a *ḥadīth* which declares that "disputation (*mirāʾ*) with respect to the Qurʾān is disbelief."[115] Ibn Taymiyya contends that these statements apply to any who dispute concerning the Qurʾān and who prefer their own opinions over the plain meaning of revelation, even if only inadvertently (by, for instance, upholding positions that, in effect, give priority to *their* reason—understood by Ibn Taymiyya as their own biased and misguided reason and not, of course, *ʿaql ṣarīḥ*, or pure reason proper—over the texts of revelation). This judgement applies even to someone who holds a position that leads to doubt merely by way of implication (*man qāla mā yūjibu al-mirya wa-l-shakk*), let alone someone who explicitly claims that his reasoning and opinion should be given priority over the texts of the Qurʾān and Sunna.

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[107] From a prophetic *ḥadīth*, which states, in part, "The scholars are the heirs of the prophets" (*inna al-ʿulamāʾ warathat al-anbiyāʾ*). See al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, 4:414; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 5:485; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 81.

[108] For this paragraph, see *Darʾ*, 1:105, line 8 to 1:108, line 8.

[109] *Darʾ*, 1:198–200.

[110] For the argument presented in this paragraph, see *Darʾ*, 1:199, line 15 to 1:200, line 7.

[111] *Darʾ*, 5:204–209.

According to Argument 22,[116] God censures the disbelievers for turning people away from the path of God and seeking crookedness therein.[117] Ibn Taymiyya cites four Qurʾānic passages[118] that concern those who turn away, or who divert others, from God's path (that is, the normative religion that God has charged His messengers to convey), be it in terms of the propositional content of revelation or its normative commands and prohibitions. One who calls people not to believe in or to obey the prophets even in an abstract sense (*man nahā al-nās nahyan mujarradan*) is guilty of this, so what of someone who encourages people to disbelieve in the specific substance of what was revealed to the prophets, arguing that his own reasoning contradicts it and is to be given priority over the contents of revelation? Furthermore, anyone who claims that sound reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*), which it is incumbent upon people to follow, contradicts revelation and that God's path consists in following such "reason" has "sought crookedness in the path of God."[119] This is so because he seeks to rectify the alleged crookedness of revelation and to redress its diversion from the truth by explaining it "correctly" on the basis of his own reasoning. In doing so, he implies that the divinely revealed path (*al-sabīl al-sharʿiyya al-samʿiyya*) transmitted via prophetic authority is not straight but crooked and that the straight path is the one newly innovated by those who contravene the argumentative methods and the explicit propositional content of revelation.

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[112] *Darʾ*, 5:204, lines 1–4.

[113] Q. *al-Anʿām* 6:130, *al-Aʿrāf* 7:35–36, *Ṭā Hā* 20:123–126, *al-Zumar* 39:71, and *al-Mulk* 67:8–9. (*Darʾ*, 5:204–205).

[114] Q. *al-Kahf* 18:56, *Ghāfir* 40:4, 40:5. (*Darʾ*, 5:206).

[115] "*al-mirāʾ fī al-Qurʾān kufr*." *Darʾ*, 5:206, lines 14–15.

[116] *Darʾ*, 5:210–211.

[117] "*yaṣuddūna ʿan sabīl Allāh wa-yabghūnahā ʿiwajan*." *Darʾ*, 5:210, line 2 (and similar at 5:211, line 2).

[118] Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:98–99, *al-Aʿrāf* 7:86, *Hūd* 11:18–19, and *Ibrāhīm* 14:2–3. (*Darʾ*, 5:210).

In Argument 23,[120] Ibn Taymiyya cites many verses about how the Prophet was sent to make a clear declaration (*balāgh mubīn*) of truth and to guide people to the straight path. That being the case, if the obvious sense of what he brought were contradicted by sound reason as the negationists claim, then he would not have fulfilled these functions and would have misled people rather than guiding them aright. It is patently clear, Ibn Taymiyya argues, that the texts of revelation do not indicate negationism with respect to the divine attributes in such a way as to lead people to it in a clear and straightforward manner. On the contrary, he argues, the obvious sense of revelation entails nothing but clear and unambiguous affirmation of the attributes in a manner so patent as to be admitted readily by the generality of Muslims. Even the Muʿtazila and other negationists concede that such affirmationism constitutes the obvious sense of scripture. Thus, if negationism were correct (although the texts, Ibn Taymiyya contends, clearly endorse the opposite), then the Prophet would be someone who knew the truth but suppressed it and instead manifested its polar opposite. Ibn Taymiyya affirms that such a position—the position of "*tajhīl* and *taḍlīl*" that we encountered in the first section of this chapter—openly contradicts the tenets of the message brought by the Prophet Muḥammad. In fact, he concludes, the contradiction is so patent as to count among those elements that are "known by necessity to be part and parcel of the religion (of Islam)."

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[119] "*fa-qad baghā sabīl Allāh ʿiwajan*" (*Darʾ*, 5:211, line 2), reminiscent of several Qurʾānic verses, namely, Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:99; *al-Aʿrāf* 7:45, 7:86; *Hūd* 11:19; *Ibrāhīm* 14:3; and *al-Kahf* 18:1.

[120] *Darʾ*, 5:211–214.

PART 2

Ibn Taymiyya's Reform of Language, Ontology, and Epistemology

⁂

CHAPTER 4

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl, or What Is Revelation?

> Never did We send a messenger except [that he spoke] in the language of his people, that he might explain to them clearly.
>
> Qurʾān, *Ibrāhīm* 14:4

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We have spoken in previous chapters of an alleged conflict between reason and revelation. Yet the notion that "reason" might contradict "revelation" means little until we define each of these two entities and determine exactly how it is that each one allegedly contradicts the other. When philosophers, theologians, and others assert a contradiction between reason and revelation, this typically means that what are taken to be the unimpeachable conclusions of reason are found to be incongruent with the "literal" (*ḥaqīqa*) or obvious (*ẓāhir*) sense of the revealed texts[1] (and, most important for Ibn Taymiyya, what those texts assert about the nature and attributes of God). According to Ibn Taymiyya, such thinkers essentially take the rational faculty and its deliverances as primary and require that the language of the revealed texts be (re)interpreted in congruence with reason. In other words, for the philosophers and the rationalistic *mutakallimūn*, the meaning of revelation is ultimately determined not by anything inherent in the texts but on the basis of (allegedly) certain and universal rational conclusions that are reached independently of the texts. Such conclusions can—and, in fact, often do (to a greater or lesser extent depending on the school in question)—contradict the plain sense of revelation, which is then

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[1] Wolfhart Heinrichs translates "*ḥaqīqa*" as the "literal, proper, veridical meaning or use of a given word." Heinrichs, "On the Genesis," 115. For an exhaustive treatment of the development of "literal meaning" in Islamic legal hermeneutics, including the meaning and development of "*ḥaqīqa*," "*ẓāhir*," and related terms, see Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, the main thesis of which is summarized in Gleave, "Conceptions of the Literal Sense (*ẓāhir*, *ḥaqīqa*) in Muslim Interpretive Thought." For a discussion of "apparent" (*ẓāhir*) meaning—in light of its relation to *ḥaqīqa* expressions, figurative usage (*majāz*), and the legitimacy of *taʾwīl*—in the legal theory of the influential sixth-/twelfth- to seventh-/thirteenth-century Shāfiʿī jurist and theologian Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233), who is representative of the mature *uṣūl al-fiqh* tradition, see Weiss, *The Search for God's Law*, 463–472.

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declared to harbor a "true" meaning that, unsurprisingly, coincides precisely with what has been derived through reason. Ibn Taymiyya sees this tendency exhibited in its most extreme form by the Muslim philosophers, who reduce revelation primarily to the status of an ethical motivator for the masses and essentially deny it any real role as a purveyor of metaphysical, ontological, or even theological truths—truths that, in the final analysis, can be known (by an elect few) through reason alone. Less extreme manifestations of this tendency mark the Muʿtazilī school as a whole and even, as Ibn Taymiyya regularly laments, later new-school Ashʿarī orthodoxy as represented, for instance, by the enthusiastically rationalistic Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.[2]

In diametric opposition to this tendency, Ibn Taymiyya insists that the true meanings of the revealed texts are, in one manner or another, entirely embedded in the language of those texts themselves. This obviates (or at least minimizes) the need to appeal, for a proper understanding of revelation, to any factors or considerations extrinsic to the texts, including—indeed, especially—the deliverances of abstract rational speculation as practiced by the philosophers and theologians.[3] We have seen in previous chapters that Ibn Taymiyya's overriding concern in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* is to vindicate a plain-sense understanding and straightforward affirmation of the divine attributes predicated of God in revelation over against the rationalists' negation (*nafy*) or nullification (*taʿṭīl*) of any of the said attributes. He insists that this way of affirmation was the consensus approach and understanding of the Salaf, and for that reason it remains uniquely authoritative throughout time. The kinds of rational objections (*muʿāriḍ ʿaqlī*) raised by various theological schools usually involve the claim that a given revealed attribute (such as the possession of a hand or face, or the act of descending or settling upon the throne), if affirmed of God in accordance with the obvious sense (*ẓāhir*) of the texts, would entail a "likening" (*tamthīl*) or "assimilation" (*tashbīh*) of God to created beings and thus infringe upon the radical uniqueness of God's divinity and His utter dissimilarity to anything tainted by creatureliness, contingency, or limitation of any kind.

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[2] In his study on al-Rāzī's ethics, Ayman Shihadeh speaks of al-Rāzī's "reputation for being an exceedingly confident rationalist, which indeed he lives up to in the absolute majority of his works." See Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 182. On al-Rāzī's disillusionment with the rationalist project and later epistemological skepticism as expressed, for instance, in his late works *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya* and *Risālat Dhamm ladhdhāt al-dunyā*, see Shihadeh, 182–203.

[3] This does not, of course, mean that Ibn Taymiyya recognizes no role for what he deems to be pure and unadulterated reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*) and sound rational inference (*naẓar ḥasan / ḥusn al-naẓar*). In fact, these play a central role in understanding revelation correctly and, he contends, are positively encouraged and even modeled by revelation itself.

Yet if Ibn Taymiyya's project essentially consists in affirming and defending a plain-sense reading of scripture while refuting the rational objections that allegedly disqualify such a reading, then does this make of him the simple-minded and crass literalist his detractors have so often accused him of being? Ibn Taymiyya's theory of interpretation, for instance, was "almost always understood by his opponents as a dogmatic denial of the existence of *majāz* [figurative usage] in the language or as a naive call directed at the adherents of *taʾwīl* for the abandonment of the attention they give to non-apparent meanings in the *Qurʾānic* and *Sunnī* texts."[4] In a similar vein, it has been noted that "subsequent tradition, even those who viewed Ibn Taymiyya favorably, understood his rejection of *majāz* as a sign of an anthropomorphic literalism rather than as a proposal of a whole alternative model of communication."[5] Ibn Taymiyya for his part—and for all his insistent and unabashed affirmationism with respect to the divine attributes—in no wise sees himself as a *mushabbih*, or "assimilator," and, in fact, he explicitly condemns any view or doctrine that he considers to entail *tashbīh* or *tamthīl*. How, then, does he propose to base the interpretation of revelation exclusively on textual and linguistic factors without falling prey to a reactionary and unyielding literalism? How does he purport to disavow *taʾwīl* in favor of the apparent sense (*ẓāhir*) of the texts without succumbing to the odious assimilationism of *tashbīh*? And finally, how does he argue for the hermeneutical independence of the texts from the speculations of the philosophers and their "rational conclusions" (*maʿqūlāt*) without undermining his own larger project, which consists not in excluding reason per se but in rehabilitating it, restoring it to what he deems to be its pure form and demonstrating its inherent congruence with revealed scripture?

The answer to these and similar questions requires a nuanced understanding of Ibn Taymiyya's theory of the meaning of revelation, for prior to taking up the question whether revelation asserts anything that conflicts with reason, we must naturally first know what it is that revelation affirms. In the current chapter, I answer these questions by synthesizing hundreds of disparate statements related to language and interpretation that appear throughout the *Darʾ* in an attempt to delineate the overriding principles of Ibn Taymiyya's "philosophy of language" and hermeneutics of revelation as he developed and employed them in his magnum opus. As this chapter demonstrates, Ibn Taymiyya's views on language and the interpretation of texts as elaborated in the *Darʾ* are very much in accord with the linguistic and hermeneutic principles he presents elsewhere in his expansive oeuvre. Specifically, the philosophy of language and hermeneutics that emerge from the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* broadly confirm and reinforce the doctrines that Ibn Taymiyya lays out in his *Fatāwā* and *Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn*,[6] as well as in his main treatise dedicated explicitly and singularly to the question of Qurʾānic interpretation, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr*.[7] Stated briefly, Ibn Taymiyya's approach to the interpretation of revelation—and, indeed, of language generally—can be said to rest on the twin pillars of context (*siyāq*, *qarāʾin*) and linguistic convention (*ʿurf*). These pillars are backed up by the discrete interpretive utterances of the Salaf and predicated on the preeminent clarity (*bayān*) and lack of ambiguity implicit in the Qurʾān's repeated characterization of itself as "clear" and "manifest" (*mubīn*).[8] For Ibn

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[4] Mohamed Yunis Ali [hereafter Yunis Ali], *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 88. On the reception history of Ibn Taymiyya from the eighth/fourteenth to the thirteenth/nineteenth century, see El-Rouayheb, "From Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī," esp. 271–287 for the reception—often overtly hostile—of Ibn Taymiyya as a crass literalist (*ḥashwī*) and corporealist (*mujassim*).

[5] Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 58, n. 113. On the relative lack of influence of Ibn Taymiyya's theory of language and meaning even on fellow Ḥanbalīs (before the current day), see Gleave, 26, n. 66 as well as Gleave, 58, n. 113, where the author remarks that "it seems that Ibn Taymiyya's critique was only really understood by his disciple Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya." On the implications of the centuries-long obscurity of Ibn Taymiyya's linguistic theory as well as the newfound influence of his (and Ibn Qayyim's) approach on current-day Ḥanbalī, and especially Salafī, *uṣūl al-fiqh* discussions, see Gleave, 176–184.

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[6] See Yunis Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 87–140 (namely, chap. 4, "Ibn Taymiyyah's Contextual Theory of Interpretation"), which is the most thorough and technical treatment to date of Ibn Taymiyya's conception of the workings of language and the proper understanding of discourse. In addition to *Fatāwā* and *Radd*, Yunis Ali also draws, to a lesser extent, on Ibn Taymiyya's *Kitāb al-Īmān*. (By contrast, the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* is referenced only twice in the course of his 48-page treatment.)

[7] See Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr*. For a presentation and analysis of this work, see Saleh, "Radical Hermeneutics." For a partial translation of Ibn Taymiyya's *Muqaddima*, see McAuliffe, "Ibn Taymiya: *Treatise on the Principles of Tafsir*," 35–43.

[8] The word *mubīn* (clear, manifest) occurs in the Qurʾān a total of 118 times as a qualifier of various objects, such as bounty (*al-faḍl al-mubīn*), victory (*al-fawz al-mubīn*–twice), the Truth (*al-ḥaqq al-mubīn*–twice), misguidance (*ḍalāl mubīn*–nineteen times), warner (*nadhīr mubīn*–twelve times, once with the definite article), conveyance [of the message] (*al-balāgh al-mubīn*–seven times), enemy (*ʿaduww mubīn*–nine times), and others. As a qualifier denoting the clarity of the Qurʾān itself, the term occurs on eight occasions (modifying various *nomina* referring to the Qurʾān), at Q. *al-Nisāʾ* 4:174 (*nūran mubīnan*); Q. *al-Māʾida* 5:15 and *al-Naml* 27:1 (*kitāb mubīn*); and Q. *Yūsuf* 12:1, *al-Shuʿarāʾ* 26:2, *al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:2, *al-Zukhruf* 43:2, and *al-Dukhān* 44:2 (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*). On two occasions, the Qurʾān states that it was revealed in a "clear Arabic tongue" (*lisān ʿarabī mubīn*) (Q. *al-Naḥl* 16:103 and *al-Shuʿarāʾ* 26:195), and on two other occasions, it refers to itself simply as a "clear Qurʾān" (*Qurʾān mubīn*) (Q. *al-Ḥijr* 15:1 and *Yā Sīn* 36:69). Finally, at Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:138, we encounter the single occurrence in the Qurʾān of the related nominal form *bayān* (clarity; elucidation): "*hādhā bayānun lil-nāsi wa-hudan wa-mawʿiẓatun lil-muttaqīn*" (This [Qurʾān] is an elucidation for mankind, and guidance, and an admonishment for the God-fearing).

Taymiyya, the statement that revelation is "clear" essentially means that it is lucid, unambiguous, and fully self-explanatory without any need for recourse to extra-textual sources such as speculative reason.[9]

In what follows, we first examine Ibn Taymiyya's notion of the contextual interpretation of language, which is a paramount feature of his hermeneutics. This will necessarily involve a brief preliminary discussion of the question whether language contains figurative usage (*majāz*). If Ibn Taymiyya is found to reject *taʾwīl*, along with the notion of metaphor or figurative use presupposed on its behalf by the philosophers and later theologians, then what of the famous Qurʾānic verse, *Āl ʿImrān* 3:7, concerning *muḥkam* (supposedly "literal") and *mutashābih* (supposedly "figurative") verses that some claim endorse *taʾwīl* or the related procedure of *tafwīḍ*? Furthermore, how does Ibn Taymiyya propose to reject the notion of figurative language as it is traditionally understood while avoiding a crude literalism, particularly with regard to the divine attributes? An exploration of these and related questions is followed by an examination of several illustrations of Ibn Taymiyya's contextual hermeneutics as brought to bear on representative "problematic" texts from the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* that are normally deemed unsalvageable without recourse to *taʾwīl* as understood by the later tradition (that of the *mutaʾakhkhirūn*).

In the latter portion of the chapter, we take up the second principal pillar of Ibn Taymiyya's interpretive theory, which involves privileging known linguistic convention (*ʿurf*) over rational speculation when interpreting words and texts. In this vein, we first explore Ibn Taymiyya's theoretical reasons for prioritizing convention in the interpretation of scripture, then we consider his account of the various ways in which language conventions change over generations and across various technical specializations, giving rise to "vague and ambiguous terms" (*alfāẓ mujmala mushtabiha*) that Ibn Taymiyya blames for numerous grave distortions in the understanding of revelation. Such importance does Ibn Taymiyya attach to this notion of "ambiguous terms" that he goes so far as to contend that "the majority of disagreements among rational thinkers are due to an equivocity of terms (*ishtirāk al-asmāʾ*)."[10] Correspondingly, he asserts that a proper clarification and analysis of terms is often sufficient to settle a significant number of theological and philosophical disagreements. After a discussion of the method Ibn Taymiyya employs for disambiguating such expressions, we close with an illustration of this method in practice via his analysis and deconstruction of the key terms *wāḥid* (one), *tawḥīd* (oneness of God), and *tarkīb* (composition) that were so hotly contested in Islamic theological and philosophical circles before and during his time.

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[9] See Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ*, 5:373–374 for a statement about why revelation must be clear and manifest in this sense. For the development of the ideas of clarity (*bayān*, *naṣṣ*, *ẓāhir*, etc.) and ambiguity (*ijmāl*, *ibhām*, *tashābuh*, etc.) in Islamic hermeneutical thinking from al-Shāfiʿī through representative figures of earlier Muʿtazilī and Ashʿarī thought and culminating with the dominance of the mature *uṣūl al-fiqh* paradigm, see Vishanoff, *Formation*, 50–56, 123–125, 162–165, and 238–240, respectively.

[10] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 1:233, lines 4–6; 1:299, lines 3–4.

1 *Taʾwīl* and the Meaning of Qurʾān 3:7

Ibn Taymiyya, as mentioned, affirms that revelation is fully independent in conveying its meanings with certitude, but how can we determine what those meanings are? In fact, one may contend, we know from the Qurʾān itself that revelation contains non-literal usage, that some of its verses are "clear" and others "ambiguous," and that the ambiguous passages have a non-literal, figurative meaning that must be determined through the application of *taʾwīl*. Ibn Taymiyya, however, maintains that this is not the case: the texts of revelation do not, in fact, endorse what is meant by the term *taʾwīl* in the (later) usage of the philosophers and *mutakallimūn*.[11] The common later definition of *taʾwīl* as "diverting a word from its apparent sense (*ẓāhir*) to its non-preponderant (*marjūḥ*) meaning"[12] is, Ibn Taymiyya contends, a convention found among "some of the later scholars,"[13] one that was not available at the time of revelation or for generations thereafter. This being the case, the word *taʾwīl* cannot legitimately be interpreted as carrying this meaning where it is used in the Qurʾān. Ibn Taymiyya seeks to substantiate this view by citing numerous early authorities who vouch for only two meanings of *taʾwīl*, to the exclusion of the third, technical (*iṣṭilāḥī*) meaning that involves deflecting a word from its apparent

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[11] One of the most thorough studies to date of Ibn Taymiyya's views on the fraught question of *taʾwīl* is al-Julaynid, *al-Imām Ibn Taymiyya wa-mawqifuhu min qaḍiyyat al-taʾwīl*.

[12] "*ṣarf al-lafẓ ʿan ẓāhirihi ilā maʿnāhu al-marjūḥ*," as defined by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in *Asās*. For a detailed presentation and analysis of al-Rāzī's explanation of *taʾwīl* in the Qurʾān, based on his extensive exegesis of Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:7 concerning the *taʾwīl* of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* verses in his famous exegetical work, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, see El-Tobgui, "Hermeneutics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī." See also Lagarde, "De l'ambiguïté (*mutašābih*) dans le Coran." On al-Rāzī as a theologian and exegete more generally, see Ceylan, *Theology and Tafsīr in the Major Works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (especially chap. 2, "Approach to the Qurʾān") and Monnot, "Le panorama religieux de Fahr al-Dīn al-Rāzī." On al-Rāzī's life and works, see Street, "Concerning the Life and Works."

[13] "*baʿḍ al-mutaʾakhkhirīn*." *Darʾ*, 1:14, line 6. For a comparative study of Ibn Taymiyya's and al-Rāzī's approaches to *taʾwīl*, see al-Qaranshāwī, *al-Taʾwīl bayna Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa-Ibn Taymiyya*.

(*ẓāhir*) or "literal" (*ḥaqīqa*) meaning to a non-apparent, or figurative (*majāz*), sense.[14] Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya affirms, an inductive survey of the stated positions (*aqwāl*) of the Salaf reveals that the early authoritative generations did not engage in *taʾwīl* in the manner of the later philosophers and theologians. Rather, they resolutely affirmed the obvious sense of the texts, while nonetheless conceding that the modality, or the "how" (*kayf*/*kayfiyya*), of certain unseen realities—most prominently the divine attributes—lay beyond the full ken of human intelligibility. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya asserts, the Salaf did not even engage in *tafwīḍ* with respect to the meanings of Qurʾānic verses. If anything, they made *taʾwīl* and *tafwīḍ* of the modality, or *kayfiyya*, of certain matters asserted in revelation, but never, he maintains, of the meaning (*maʿnā*) or the (straightforward) explication (*tafsīr*) of anything asserted therein.

1.1 ***The Meaning of "*****Taʾwīl*****"***

The majority of later Islamic theological and philosophical writings, and indeed most Western academic studies as well, take for granted that the Qurʾān, by its own declaration, is composed of two main types of verses, "clear" or determinate (*muḥkam*) and "ambiguous" or indeterminate (*mutashābih*), and that the latter are susceptible of a non-literal or figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*) at variance with their apparent sense and in which their true significance lies. Support for this view is normally sought in Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:7, which speaks of "*āyāt muḥkamāt*," declared to be the "mother of the Book" (*umm al-kitāb*), and "others that are *mutashābihāt*." The verse castigates those who, on account of a waywardness in their hearts, follow the *mutashābihāt*, seeking thereby to arouse discord (*fitna*) and to uncover the "*taʾwīl*" of said verses.[15] The remainder of verse 3:7, read with a pause in either of two critical junctures, declares the *taʾwīl* of such verses to be known either by God alone or by God and "those firmly grounded in knowledge" (*al-rāsikhūna fī al-ʿilm*)—presumably those possessing knowledge in religion, the *ʿulamāʾ*.[16] Later scholars concluded that if the verse is read such that the *taʾwīl* is known by God alone, then the appropriate stance of the believer in the face of a *mutashābih* verse is *tafwīḍ*, namely, declaring the apparent sense inoperative while refraining from offering a specific alternative explanation of the verse. Those who read the verse such that the *rāsikhūna fī al-ʿilm* are also said to know the *taʾwīl* generally understand this as an invitation for specialized religious scholars—those "firmly grounded in knowledge"—to search for and suggest possible alternative, non-literal meanings of the verse in question. It is normally stipulated that the non-literal, or figurative, meaning put forth must conform to the known conventions of the Arabic language. Further, it is generally considered prudent for the interpreter to refrain from claiming certain knowledge (*yaqīn*) that a suggested meaning is definitively the one intended by God. Rather, he should simply suggest that such a meaning may be the one meant while admitting that the true meaning intended by God can be known with certitude by God alone. Yet the Qurʾān does not itself indicate precisely which verses are *muḥkam* and which are *mutashābih*. The tradition of the later *mutakallimūn* nonetheless generally identifies the putatively "ambiguous" verses as those whose apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) has been determined to be impossible—typically on the strength of a so-called rational objection (*muʿāriḍ ʿaqlī*)—thus necessitating an abandonment of this apparent meaning in favor of either *taʾwīl* or *tafwīḍ*.[17] Precisely

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[14] For Ibn Taymiyya's historical account of the rise and development of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy, along with his refutation of this division and his treatment of numerous other language-related topics that are typically discussed in works of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Īmān*, 75–103 (*Kitab Al-Iman: Book of Faith*, chap. 8, 98–131), as well as Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, 20:400–497. (Both sources are also referenced in Heinrichs, "On the Genesis," 115, n. 1.) Heinrichs is inclined to think that Ibn Taymiyya was correct in attributing the birth of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy as a hermeneutical tool to the early (Basran) Muʿtazila. See Heinrichs, 117, 132, 139. Towards the end of the article, Heinrichs describes how Muʿtazilī theologians seem to have adopted the philologist and exegete Abū ʿUbayda's (d. ca. 210/825) early sense of *majāz* as the "natural-language" rewriting of idiomatic expressions and extended it to "cases which were linguistically quite clear and of no interest to Abū ʿUbayda, such as metaphors that were *only theologically objectionable*" (emphasis mine). Heinrichs, 139. On *majāz* in Abū ʿUbayda, see (to be read in light of Heinrichs, "On the Genesis") Almagor, "The Early Meaning of *Majāz* and the Nature of Abū ʿUbayda's Exegesis."

[15] For a useful discussion of the rise of *taʾwīl* and the various positions taken on the meaning

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of Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:7, see al-Kattānī, *Jadal*, 1:549–553. For a thorough study in English on this verse, one that compares Sunnī, Shīʿī, Muʿtazilī, and Sufi approaches, as well as commentaries based on prophetic *ḥadīth*, and contrasts these with commentaries based on "reasoned opinion," or *raʾy*, see Kinberg, "*Muḥkamāt* and *Mutashābihāt* (Koran 3/7)," the appendix of which provides a concise survey of a number of modern studies on the topic.

[16] The full verse reads: "He it is who has sent down to you (O Muḥammad) the Book. In it are verses that are *muḥkam*; they are the mother of the Book. Others are *mutashābih*. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is *mutashābih*, seeking discord and searching for its *taʾwīl*; and none knows its *taʾwīl* save God. And those firmly grounded in knowledge say, 'We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord.' And none shall grasp the message save men of understanding." (Trans. Yusuf Ali, with modifications.) The alternative punctuation of the recited verse yields "and none knows its *taʾwīl* save God and those firmly grounded in knowledge; they say …" Though English translations generally render the word *muḥkam* as "clear," *mutashābih* as "ambiguous" (or "allegorical"), and *taʾwīl* as "interpretation," I have purposely left these terms untranslated since their exact meaning is precisely what is at issue for Ibn Taymiyya and what forms our main concern in this section.

[17] From a historical perspective, it appears that the Baghdādī Muʿtazilī theologian Abū Jaʿfar

which verses were to be counted as *mutashābih* and therefore open to interpretation was, naturally, the subject of much debate, fueled by various schools' contending doctrines regarding the nature and dictates of reason and the scope of its prerogative to adjudicate over the meaning of the revealed texts.

Ibn Taymiyya, for his part, rejects out of hand this later, technical definition of *taʾwīl* and the procedure of figurative interpretation practiced under its umbrella.[18] He counters that the eventual standard definition of *taʾwīl* as "the deflection of a word from its preponderant meaning to a non-preponderant meaning on the basis of a relevant indicant"[19] represents a technical usage that originated only in the academic convention of the later philosophers and theologians and was unknown to the Salaf (and the early scholars of *tafsīr*), in whose language the Qurʾān was revealed and in light of whose conventions it must therefore be understood. This being the case, Ibn Taymiyya argues, it is illegitimate to read the later, technical sense of the word *taʾwīl* back into the Qurʾān as if it were the meaning that was intended by the Book's Author and that would have been understood by its initial recipient audience.[20] But what, then, is the meaning of "*taʾwīl*" if not the widely accepted sense of figurative interpretation taken for granted by the later theologians (*mutaʾakhkhirūn*)?

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al-Iskāfī (d. 240/854) was the first to focus the discussion of Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:7 on the notion of ambiguity, defining *muḥkam* verses as those that are determinate and univocal in meaning and *mutashābih* verses as those that are indeterminate and admit, therefore, of more than a single interpretation. This typology was later adopted by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935 or 936) and by his contemporary, the influential Ḥanafī legal theorist Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī (d. 340/952), until verse Q. 3:7 "eventually came to be widely regarded as an affirmation of ambiguity in the Qurʾān" (Vishanoff, *Formation*, 17).

[18] For Ibn Taymiyya's main discussions of *taʾwīl* (and *tafwīḍ*), see Argument 16 (*Darʾ*, 1:201–208), Argument 27 (*Darʾ*, 5:234–241), and also (on *taʾwīl* specifically) *Darʾ*, 5:380–382 (which is part of Argument 41). On the relationship between *taʾwīl* and the *mutashābih* verses of the Qurʾān, see also Ibn Taymiyya's separate treatise "Risālat al-Iklīl fī al-mutashābih wa-l-taʾwīl," in *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil al-kubrā*, 2:3–36.

[19] "*ṣarf al-lafẓ ʿan al-iḥtimāl al-rājiḥ ilā al-iḥtimāl al-marjūḥ li-dalīl yaqtarinu bihi*." Cited at *Darʾ*, 5:235, lines 3–4 and again at 5:382, lines 13–14. The addition "*li-dalīl yaqtarinu bihi*" is found at *Darʾ*, 1:206, line 7. Ibn Taymiyya gives an alternatively worded definition in another passage: "*ṣarf al-lafẓ ʿan al-maʿnā al-madlūl ʿalayhi al-mafhūm minhu ilā maʿnā yukhālifu dhālika*" (*Darʾ*, 1:206, lines 3–4), which, for him, amounts to "deflecting the texts from what they properly denote" (*ṣarf al-nuṣūṣ ʿan muqtaḍāhā*) (*Darʾ*, 5:380, line 7) and, shortly thereafter, "*ṣarf al-nuṣūṣ ʿan muqtaḍāhā wa-madlūlihā wa-maʿnāhā*" (*Darʾ*, 5:382, lines 2–3).

[20] Gleave (*Islam and Literalism*, 65) makes a similar comment about the word *tafsīr*, which appears only once in the Qurʾān, at Q. *al-Furqān* 25:33: "And they come not to you (O Muḥammad) with any parable but that We bring you the truth and a better explanation (*illā jiʾnāka bi-l-ḥaqqi wa-aḥsana tafsīran*)."

Ibn Taymiyya calls upon a wide range of evidence to establish that the word *taʾwīl*—as it was employed by the seventh-century inhabitants of the Hijaz whose language habits form the linguistic matrix presupposed by revelation—carried only two possible meanings,[21] neither of which is related to the third, specialized meaning that the word acquired when it was adopted as a technical term by later theologians and philosophers. The first of these meanings, according to Ibn Taymiyya, is "explication" (*tafsīr*) and "elucidation" (*bayān*), which he defines as a straightforward explanation of the apparent sense, or simply the "meaning" (*maʿnā*), of revelation "as found in the work of al-Ṭabarī and others." In another place, he defines it as "cognizance of the intended meaning of [an instance of] speech such that it can be contemplated, grasped by the mind, and understood."[22] The second original meaning of the word *taʾwīl* in the convention of the Companions and the Salaf, according to Ibn Taymiyya, is "the ultimate reality of that to which the speech pertains" (*ḥaqīqat mā yaʾūlu ilayhi al-kalām*).[23] In another passage, Ibn Taymiyya renders this second meaning as "the reality of a thing, like its 'how' (or modality), which is only known to God."[24] In yet another passage, he further clarifies that the "*taʾwīl*" of those verses pertaining to God and unseen realities (particularly the events of the last day) represents "the very [ontological] reality" (*nafs al-ḥaqīqa*) of the entities mentioned in such verses.[25] With respect to God, this *ḥaqīqa* refers to the quintessential nature of His divine essence and attributes, which is known only to Him.[26] This definition of *ḥaqīqa* as the very reality of a thing is reminiscent of that given by al-Bāqillānī, who offers two definitions of the term in his *al-Taqrīb wa-l-irshād*, one of which is "the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) behind the qualification (*waṣf*) of a thing by which it is specified [or defined] and that property (*maʿnā*) on account of which it merits the qualification, like saying, 'The *ḥaqīqa* of a scholar (*ʿālim*) is the fact that he possesses knowledge (*ʿilm*).' "[27] Al-Bāqillānī's definition of *ḥaqīqa* resembles that of al-Ashʿarī before him, who defined *ḥaqīqa* "not as a certain way of using words [i.e., literally], but as the true nature of things—the actual qualities by virtue of which things can be called by certain names."[28] Indeed, the precise relationship between words—specifically "names," or nouns (*asmāʾ*)—and the ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of the nominata (*musammayāt*) to which they apply is of central importance to Ibn Taymiyya's larger theological project in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* and elsewhere.

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[21] For these two meanings as exhausting the original definition of "*taʾwīl*," see *Darʾ*, 5:234, lines 9–12. See also Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Īmān*, 33, lines 3–8.

[22] "*maʿrifat al-murād bi-l-kalām ḥattā yutadabbara wa-yuʿqala wa-yufqah.*" *Darʾ*, 5:382, lines 10–11. On *taʾwīl* as linguistic explanation (*tafsīr*) in Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of terms denoting the divine attributes, see also Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 53–55, 68.

[23] In another place, "*al-ḥaqīqa allatī yaʾūlu ilayhā al-khiṭāb*" (*Darʾ*, 5:382, lines 4–5). For an extensive analysis of the term *taʾwīl* as used in the Qurʾān, including in this second sense cited by Ibn Taymiyya, see Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 66–72.

[24] "*ḥaqīqat al-shayʾ ka-l-kayfiyya allatī lā yaʿlamuhā illā Allāh.*" *Darʾ*, 7:328, lines 10–11. See also *Darʾ*, 5:382, lines 11–12 ("… *wa-huwa al-taʾwīl alladhī infarada Allāh bi-ʿilmihi wa-huwa al-ḥaqīqa allatī lā yaʿlamuhā illā huwa*").

[25] "*wa-ammā taʾwīl mā akhbara Allāh bihi ʿan nafsihi wa-ʿan al-yawm al-ākhir fa-huwa nafs al-ḥaqīqa allatī akhbara ʿanhā.*" *Darʾ*, 1:207, lines 4–5. See also *Darʾ*, 5:382, line 5 ("*nafs al-ḥaqāʾiq allatī akhbara Allāh ʿanhā*") and 9:24, lines 8–9 ("*al-ḥaqīqa allatī hiya nafs mā huwa ʿalayhi fī al-khārij*").

[26] "*wa-dhālika fī ḥaqq Allāh huwa kunh dhātihi wa-ṣifātihi allatī lā yaʿlamuhā ghayruhu.*" *Darʾ*, 1:207, line 5. See also *Darʾ*, 5:382, lines 6–7, where Ibn Taymiyya explains that "the *taʾwīl* [of verses] pertaining to God is none other than His own holy self [or essence] qualified by His exalted attributes" (*wa-taʾwīl mā akhbara bihi ʿan nafsihi huwa nafsuhu al-muqaddasa al-mawṣūfa bi-ṣifātihi al-ʿaliyya*).

Ibn Taymiyya establishes this dual definition of *taʾwīl*—as simple explication of meaning and as the ultimate reality of a thing—primarily on the strength of statements by the Companions and early exegetes explicitly defining it as such, as well as on the basis of *tafsīr* by the Companions and early exegetes on verses additional to Q. 3:7 that also employ the term *taʾwīl*. To establish the meaning of *taʾwīl* among the early exegetes, Ibn Taymiyya appeals to Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. between 100/718 and 104/722), the early "leader of the exegetes" (*imām ahl al-tafsīr*), who is said to have asked Ibn ʿAbbās (d. ca. 68/687) to provide him the "*tafsīr*" of the entire Qurʾān, which he (Ibn ʿAbbās) did (*wa-fassarahu lahu*).[29] Ibn Taymiyya informs us that Mujāhid used to maintain that those firmly grounded in knowledge (*al-rāsikhūna fī al-ʿilm*) know the "*taʾwīl*" of the Qurʾān, meaning the *tafsīr* of it, like the *tafsīr* bequeathed to Mujāhid by Ibn ʿAbbās.[30] According to Ibn Taymiyya, this definition of *taʾwīl* (in the sense of *tafsīr*) was also endorsed by Ibn Qutayba and others who upheld that those firmly grounded in knowledge are capable of knowing the *taʾwīl* of the *mutashābih* verses. In addition to Mujāhid and Ibn Qutayba, figures such as Ibn ʿAbbās, Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 37/657), and Ibn Isḥāq (d. ca. 150/767), among others, also held that the pause in verse 3:7 should fall after "*al-rāsikhūna fī al-ʿilm*," such that those who are "firmly grounded in knowledge," too, in addition to God, are said to know the *taʾwīl* of the *mutashābihāt*.[31] The alternative position—that of setting the pause after "*Allāh*," such that the *taʾwīl* of the *mutashābihāt* is known only to God—was reported also to have been held by Ibn ʿAbbās, in addition to eminent early authorities such as Ubayy b. Kaʿb (d. ca. 35/656),[32] ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd (d. 32/652 or 653), ʿĀʾisha (d. 58/678), and ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 93/711 or 712 *or* 94/712 or 713), among others.[33]

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[27] Al-Bāqillānī, *Taqrīb*, 1:352 (also cited in Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 118; translation mine). Gleave comments that *ḥaqīqa* in this sense "means something like 'the truth conditions of a defining characteristic'. It refers to the reality of the individual rather than a fact of language" (Gleave, 118)—which closely resembles Ibn Taymiyya's characterization of it here. For a fuller treatment of al-Bāqillānī's hermeneutics, see Vishanoff, *Formation*, 160–189.

[28] Vishanoff, *Formation*, 22. This conception of *ḥaqīqa*, Vishanoff elaborates, "suggested that the Muʿtazilī abandonment of the literal sense of scripture was not merely a departure from ordinary linguistic usage, but a *misrepresentation of ontological reality*" (emphasis mine). Vishanoff, 22.

[29] *Darʾ*, 5:381, lines 15–16. Mujāhid (b. Jabr) is reported to have said, "I read (*ʿaraḍtu*) the *muṣḥaf* to Ibn ʿAbbās from beginning to end, stopping him at every verse and asking him about it" (*Darʾ*, 1:208, lines 7–8).

[30] See *Darʾ*, 5:381, lines 16–17.

In light of the two original meanings of the word *taʾwīl* and the alternative pauses recognized by the Companions, how did the early community understand verse 3:7? According to Ibn Taymiyya, whenever this verse was read with the pause after "*al-rāsikhūna fī al-ʿilm*," the Companions and the Salaf interpreted the kind of *taʾwīl* that is known by those who are firmly grounded in knowledge in accordance with the first meaning cited above. That is, they understood it as a reference to (straightforward) *tafsīr*, such that whoever had knowledge of the Qurʾān's *tafsīr* also had knowledge of its *taʾwīl*.[34] In contrast, whenever the verse was read with the pause after "*Allāh*," the Companions and the Salaf interpreted the kind of *taʾwīl* that is known only by God in accordance with the second meaning cited above. That is, they understood it as a reference to God's exclusive knowledge of the ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*) and the modality (*kayfiyya*) of the unseen (whether this pertain to matters such as the events of the day of judgement or to matters such as the essence and attributes of God). This dual interpretation of the term *taʾwīl* (which alternates according to where one pauses when reading the verse) was determined and imposed, according to Ibn Taymiyya, by the Companions' common understanding of the "conventional language known among them" (*lughatuhum al-maʿrūfa baynahum*). This shared language, as indicated in the Companions' own statements and those of the early exegetes, admitted of only the two meanings discussed above to the exclusion of the third, "specialized technical meaning of *taʾwīl*" (*maʿnā al-taʾwīl al-iṣṭilāḥī al-khāṣṣ*) as developed and employed by the later philosophers and theologians.[35] For Ibn Taymiyya, therefore, the question is not one of *ḥaqīqa* ("literal") versus *majāz* ("figurative"), as it was for the later *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* traditions,[36] but one of *ḥaqīqa* (in the sense of the ontological reality and modality of a thing's external existence) versus *maʿnā* (in the sense of straightforward lexical signification). Unlike in the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* distinction, the two terms of the *ḥaqīqa–maʿnā* pair are not mutually exclusive opposites; rather, they are two distinct yet complementary aspects—one semantic and notional, the other existential and ontological—of any given reality.

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[31] *Darʾ*, 1:205, lines 13–15.

[32] Ibn al-Jazarī reports a wide range of disagreement on the date of Ubayy b. Kaʿb's death, citing the years 19/640, 20/641, 23/644, 30/650 or 651, 32/652 or 653, 33/653 or 654, and, finally, "a week or a month before the assassination of ʿUthmān [b. ʿAffān]," which occurred in summer 35/656. The author himself favors this last date. See Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya*, 1:34 (no. 131).

[33] *Darʾ*, 1:205, lines 10–13.

[34] "*wa-mithl hādhā al-taʾwīl yaʿlamuhu man yaʿlamu tafsīr al-Qurʾān*." *Darʾ*, 5:381, line 14.

In addition to the early authorities of *tafsīr*, Ibn Taymiyya calls to witness several other reports (*āthār*) of the Companions to complete his mapping of the original semantic field covered by the word *taʾwīl*. He explains that when used with respect to imperative speech (command or prohibition), "*taʾwīl*" is the act of doing the thing commanded or refraining from the thing prohibited.[37] In support of this meaning, he cites Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 198/814), who reportedly said, "*al-sunna taʾwīl al-amr wa-l-nahy*," which was taken to mean that proper conformity to the prophetic Sunna entails careful observance of the commands and prohibitions of the Islamic religion. A further report from ʿĀʾisha and one from ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr provide supplementary evidence for this meaning of *taʾwīl*.[38] In citing this array of evidence, Ibn Taymiyya argues that there is no known circumstance in which the Companions and Salaf used the term *taʾwīl* to indicate the suspension of a word's well-known signification—that is, its *ẓāhir* (apparent) or *rājiḥ* (preponderant) meaning—in favor of a non-apparent (*muʾawwal*), non-preponderant (*marjūḥ*), or non-literal/figurative (*majāz*) meaning. Rather, it was always used either in the sense of explication (*tafsīr*) or in the sense of the ultimate reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of a thing or the outcome of an affair. It is for this reason that, when explicating verses such as "*al-Raḥmānu ʿalā l-ʿarsh istawā*" (the Most Merciful has settled upon the throne)[39] or "*thumma stawā ʿalā l-ʿarsh*" (then He settled upon the throne),[40] early authorities like Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), Rabīʿa (d. ca. 136/753),[41] and others used to say, "God's settling [on the throne] is known (*al-istiwāʾ maʿlūm*), but the modality of it is unknown (*al-kayf majhūl*)."[42] In other words, the lexical signification (*maʿnā*) of the phrase "*istawā ʿalā al-ʿarsh*"—according to the speech convention of the Arabs—is known (*maʿlūm*); it is the modality (*kayf/kayfiyya*) of how such an action pertains to God, who is utterly unlike any created being, that is unknown to us (*huwa al-majhūl lanā*).[43] According to Ibn Taymiyya, it is the metaphysical and ontological modality—and therefore the ultimate reality (*ḥaqīqa*)—of God's settling that constitutes the *taʾwīl* that is known only unto God, *not* the lexical significance of the phrase "*istawā ʿalā al-ʿarsh*" (the *taʾwīl* of which, from the linguistic perspective, is known to us as well). If the lexical signification of the verse, as understood according to the linguistic convention of the Salaf, were not known to us, then the verse would simply have no determinable meaning for us whatsoever, an eventuality precluded by the fact of revelation's signature clarity (*bayān*) and lack of ambiguity.

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[35] See *Darʾ*, 1:206, lines 2–3.

[36] Indeed, *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* are usually the first pair of hermeneutic terms dealt with in mature works of legal theory. Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 36.

[37] "*huwa nafs fiʿl al-maʾmūr bihi wa-tark al-manhī ʿanhu.*" *Darʾ*, 1:206, lines 18–19.

[38] See *Darʾ*, 1:206, line 19 to 1:207, line 3.

[39] Q. *Ṭā Hā* 20:5.

[40] Q. *al-Aʿrāf* 7:54.

[41] Rabīʿa b. Abī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Farrūkh, also known as "Rabīʿat al-Raʾy." There is some disagreement regarding the date of Rabīʿa's death. The year 136/753 (or 754) seems to be the most common date reported and is the one given, for instance, by al-Dhahabī, on the

In support of this understanding of *taʾwīl*, Ibn Taymiyya appeals to the early jurist, *muftī* of Medina, and contemporary of Mālik, Ibn al-Mājishūn (d. 164/780 or 781),[44] as well as to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal "and others among the Salaf," who used to say, "We do not know the 'how' (*kayfiyya*) of what God has stated about Himself, even though we do know its explication (*tafsīrahu*) and its meaning (*maʿnāhu*)."[45] Indeed, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) reportedly stated that "God did not reveal any verse except that He desired [us] to know what He

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authority of Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845) from al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823). See al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 6:93. Other dates cited are 133/750 or 751 and 142/759 or 760.

[42] See *Darʾ*, 1:207, line 6; 5:382, line 9; and 7:328, line 11.

[43] *Darʾ*, 5:235, line 2.

[44] ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Salama al-Mājishūn, referred to alternatively as "al-Mājishūn" and "Ibn al-Mājishūn," not to be confused with his son, ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. al-Mājishūn (d. 213/828 or 214/829), an accomplished jurist and *muftī* of Medina in his own right. On (Ibn) al-Mājishūn's theological views, see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 7:309–312, esp. 311 ff. Goldziher cites Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr's (d. 463/1071) description of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. al-Mājishūn as "der erste […], welcher die Lehre der muhammedanischen Theologen in Medîna in einem Codex zusammenfasste" (the first to summarize the teachings of Muslim theologians in Medina in a codex). See Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, 2:219, also cited (with the English translation given here) and discussed in Brockopp, "Competing Theories of Authority in Early Mālikī Texts," 9.

[45] *Darʾ*, 1:207, lines 6–8. See also *Darʾ*, 5:234, lines 14–16 and further at 5:235, lines 1–2, where Ibn Taymiyya explains that "knowledge of [the meaning of] *istiwāʾ* ('settling') is a question of *tafsīr*, which is the *taʾwīl* of which we have knowledge. As for the modality (*al-kayf*) [thereof], this is the *taʾwīl* of which only God has knowledge and which is unknown (*majhūl*) to us." (See index of Arabic passages.) On Ibn Taymiyya's affirmation of God's names and attributes as revealed, but without probing into modality, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 48–56 (esp. 48–52).

meant by it,"[46] and in this spirit, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal "explicated (*fassara*) all the *mutashābih* verses in the Qurʾān and clarified what was meant by them."[47] By sharp contrast, the third, technical meaning of "*taʾwīl*," involving deflection to a non-literal (or figurative) interpretation, was condemned by the Salaf and early authorities as "false and devoid of any reality (or truth)" (*bāṭil lā ḥaqīqata lahu*).[48] This third form of *taʾwīl*, Ibn Taymiyya concludes, amounts to "distorting words from their true intended meanings"[49] and "deviating with regard to God's names and (revealed) verses."[50]

2 The Centrality of Context and Ibn Taymiyya's "Contextual *Taʾwīl*"

We have seen in the preceding section that, according to Ibn Taymiyya, the texts of revelation do not allow for *taʾwīl* (or even *tafwīḍ*) in the sense employed by later thinkers, which presumes the presence of a metaphorical meaning arrived at by diverting a text from its primary, literal (*ḥaqīqa*) signification to a secondary, non-literal or figurative (*majāz*) meaning. Are we to understand from this that Ibn Taymiyya did not accept the existence of non-literal usage, either in language as a whole or in the texts of revelation in particular, in other words, that he did not believe in the equivalent of what is meant by *taʾwīl* in the later tradition? To answer this important question, we must carefully examine Ibn Taymiyya's views on the centrality of context in determining the meaning of language and texts, with linguistic factors determinative throughout, as opposed to the notion of primary/preponderant versus secondary/non-preponderant meanings with reason playing the decisive role in determining the intended meaning. In effect, Ibn Taymiyya advances a two-pronged argument concerning context, one addressing the use of language per se and the other addressing the specific case of the language and texts of revelation as embodied in the Qurʾān and Sunna.

Regarding the general use of language, when Ibn Taymiyya argues that there is no "figurative" or "non-literal" use (*majāz*) in language—and hence no *taʾwīl* as understood by the later tradition—he is not arguing that words can have only one meaning or that they must always be understood in their most obvious sense, that is, the sense that the tradition normally refers to as the "literal" (*ḥaqīqa*), "apparent" (*ẓāhir*), or "preponderant" (*rājiḥ*) meaning of the word. Rather, he maintains that the distinction between "literal" (*ḥaqīqa*) and "non-literal" (*majāz*) meanings is, in fact, artificial, a mental construct entirely divorced from the way language functions in the real world.[51] How is this so? Ibn Taymiyya is fully aware that many words in a given language can be (and often are) used to denote a number of different meanings, admitting an equivocity that he would nevertheless be loath to classify as "metaphorical" or "figurative." For instance, he accepts that the conventions of the Arabic language allow the word *yad* ("hand") to be used to mean things other than a five-fingered appendage of flesh and bone. Depending on context, for example, it may be used to mean "help" (as in English "Can you give me a hand?") or "collusion" (as in English "She certainly had a hand in this!"). What Ibn Taymiyya rejects is the notion that words possess, entirely independent of context, particular "literal," "real," or "primary" meanings, which we are then, in certain circumstances (often motivated by putatively rational considerations), compelled to abandon in favor of "secondary," "non-literal," or "metaphorical" meanings. Rather, for Ibn Taymiyya, all meaning—and in each and every instance of language use—is determined by context, as judged in light of the known, communally shared conventions of the language in question.[52]

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[46] "*mā anzala Allāh āya illā wa-huwa yuḥibbu an yuʿlama mā arāda bihā.*" *Darʾ*, 1:208, lines 9–10.

[47] *Darʾ*, 1:207, lines 10–11.

[48] *Darʾ*, 5:382, line 15.

[49] "*taḥrīf al-kalim ʿan mawāḍiʿihi*" (*Darʾ*, 5:382, lines 15–-16), borrowed from several Qurʾānic passages in which past communities are indicted for distorting their respective scriptures. See, for instance, Q. *al-Nisāʾ* 4:46 and *al-Māʾida* 5:13. On the concept of *taḥrīf* as deployed in the Qurʾān, see Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 66–72.

[50] "*al-ilḥād fī asmāʾ Allāh wa-āyātihi*" (*Darʾ*, 5:382, line 16), an allusion to Q. *al-Aʿrāf* 7:180 and *Fuṣṣilat* 41:40.

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[51] Yunis Ali mentions the difficulty, even in modern pragmatics, of providing a "water-tight distinction" between literal and non-literal use. He remarks that mainstream scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* devised lists of criteria to make this distinction clear but that some *uṣūlī*s doubted their adequacy. By contrast, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya "deny the plausibility of the distinction altogether," claiming that it is a "technical construct, and that it has no empirical basis." Yunis Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 75. For a detailed presentation of Ibn Taymiyya's (and Ibn Qayyim's) arguments against the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* distinction, see Yunis Ali, 109–114. On Ibn Taymiyya's own account of *majāz*, see Yunis Ali, 114–125.

[52] See also Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, 20:459, where he affirms that "a word can only signify in conjunction with the non-verbal context [in which it is used]" (*al-lafẓ lam yadulla illā bi-qarāʾin maʿnawiyya*). Interestingly, Ibn Taymiyya's position here resembles that of his contemporary, the famous Shīʿī jurist Jamāl al-Dīn ("al-ʿAllāma") al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325). In response to common definitions of *ẓāhir* given by the likes of al-Ghazālī and al-Āmidī, who define *ẓāhir* as the meaning that is likely to conform with a word's putative initial assignation, or *waḍʿ*, but do not negate the possibility that the speaker may have intended a non-*waḍʿī* (that is, a *majāzī*) meaning, al-Ḥillī states: "The *ẓāhir* is not restricted to whatever is indicated by the original [*waḍʿ*] or by convention. Rather every utterance in which there is a meaning that establishes itself as preponderant (*tarajjaḥ*) is *ẓāhir* in relation to [the intended meaning]." See al-Ḥillī, *Nihāyat al-wuṣūl*, 2:489 (cited, with the translation given here, in Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 50). (See index of Arabic passages.) See further

As a consequence of this radical dependence of meaning on context, the English word "hand" or the Arabic word *yad* simply cannot be said to signify a particular meaning absent any context whatsoever—that is, say, as an isolated item in a vocabulary list or as written up at random on a blackboard. Rather, in every instance in which the word "hand" (*yad*) is used, it is perforce employed in a particular context and against the backdrop of a particular linguistic convention, and what the speaker means by the word in any given utterance can, in every case, only be determined by considering that context in light of that convention. In other words, even if it happens to be the case that the word "hand" is used to mean "five-fingered fleshy appendage" in the great majority of instances in which a given speech community uses it, that would not make this particular meaning the preponderant (*rājiḥ*), real/literal (*ḥaqīqa*), or apparent (*ẓāhir*) sense of the word, with the meanings "help" and "collusion" classed as secondary, non-preponderant (*marjūḥ*), or figurative (*majāz*). This is so because in every instance, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, we are only able to determine what the speaker means by any word[53] through considering the context in which it has been used. Thus, if one were to say, "I shall wash my hands before dinner," then the real, literal, *ḥaqīqa* meaning of "hand" in this instance would indeed be the five-fingered appendage attached to the end of one's arm. If, however, one were to ask, "Can you please give me a hand?" then the real, literal, *ḥaqīqa* sense of "hand" in *this* instance, as determined conclusively and unambiguously by the context, would be none other than "help" or "assistance." Indeed, a person who, upon being asked to "give me a hand," proceeded to cut off his metacarpus at the wrist and offer up his actual physical hand would be deemed fully incapable of judging context or else woefully ignorant of the universally shared conventions of the English language. Further, he would be unjustified in accusing his interlocutor of abandoning clear speech in favor of a vague, or even slightly ambiguous, turn of phrase. Finally, since "help" is the *only* meaning that any English speaker would understand in this context, then "help," according to Ibn Taymiyya, would be the apparent (*ẓāhir*), "literal" (*ḥaqīqa*) sense of the word in this particular instance. Using the word "hand" to mean "help" in such a case would not count as metaphorical for him since, once again, all possible connotations of a given word are *ḥaqīqa* ("real," "literal") and *ẓāhir* ("apparent") in their respective

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remarks on al-Ḥillī's conception of *ẓāhir*, and the role that context plays in it, at Gleave, 50–55.

[53] See Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Īmān*, 32, where he states, "No one may construe a person's speech [to mean] other than what he [the speaker] is known to have intended [or meant], not according to the [various meanings] that word may convey in any [random] person's speech" (*laysa li-aḥad an yaḥmila kalām aḥad min al-nās illā ʿalā mā ʿurifa annahu arādahu lā ʿalā mā yaḥtamiluhu dhālika al-lafẓ fī kalām kulli aḥad*).

contexts.[54] Deflection of the meaning (*ṣarf al-maʿnā*) of a revealed text, invariably negative in Ibn Taymiyya's view, would involve a deflection from whatever meaning has been determined—by context, convention, and related texts—to be the apparent sense in favor of some other meaning that cannot be defended on these bases. Presumably, this would be done out of a desire to accommodate an alleged rational objection to the primary (and in this sense "*ẓāhir*") meaning, as duly determined by the factors mentioned. Such a deflection can, in fact, be carried out only on the basis of a scriptural proof or indicant (*dalīl sharʿī*),[55] by which Ibn Taymiyya presumably means other texts of revelation that illuminate, and qualify the interpretation of, the text whose meaning is to be deflected.[56]

In addition to the central role he assigns to context, Ibn Taymiyya elsewhere speaks of the centrality of *tabādur* (the sense that first impresses itself upon the mind) in determining the meaning intended by the speaker (*murād al-mutakallim*) in a given communicative situation. All lexicographers agree, for instance, that the word *ẓahr* ("back") can be used in Arabic to refer to all animal backs. Nevertheless, what first comes to mind (*mā yatabādaru ilā al-dhihn*) for most people upon hearing the word *ẓahr* is the back of a human only. This, according to Ibn Taymiyya, results from the fact that "*ẓahr*" happens to be used most frequently in reference to human backs, as opposed to the backs of ants, or camels, or horses. This frequency does not, however, make the human back a unique and privileged *ḥaqīqa* meaning of the word *ẓahr* but only makes it the statistically dominant one. As for whether, in any given instance of actual language use, a human back, an ant back, or any other type of back is the meaning intended by the speaker, this can only be determined on the basis of various contextual factors accompanying the given utterance.[57] In discussing the notion of *tabādur*, Mohamed Yunis Ali remarks that "the opponents of *majāz* [such as Ibn Taymiyya] would prefer to say that what occurs to the mind first in the actual respective situation is the intended and, consequently, the proper meaning."[58] In other words, proper meaning (*al-maʿnā al-ḥaqīqa*) and intended meaning (*al-maʿnā al-murād*)—as determined (partly) on the basis of *tabādur*—are, for Ibn Taymiyya, one and the same in any given instance. Surprisingly, Ibn Taymiyya does not discuss the concept of *tabādur* explicitly in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, despite the fact that he deals at length with other aspects of the communicative process in light of which he holds proper and intended meaning to be the same.

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[54] Ibn Taymiyya states explicitly, as a matter of principle, that "when contextual evidence makes the meaning of a word clear, then *that* [meaning] is the apparent [or 'literal'] sense [i.e., in *that* context]" (*al-lafẓ idhā qurina bihi mā yubayyinu maʿnāhu kāna dhālika huwa ẓāhirahu*). *Dar'*, 5:236, line 2.

[55] See *Dar'*, 5:233, lines 9–11.

[56] See Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, 93–105 (esp. 93–95). This passage is summarized in Saleh, "Radical Hermeneutics," 144–148.

[57] See, e.g., Ibn Taymiyya, MF, 20:436–437 and MF, 20:449–450.

[58] Yunis Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 111–112.

Ibn Taymiyya's theory of meaning as entirely dependent on and inseparable from context, along with the related concept of *tabādur*, stands in notable contrast to the view of mainstream legal theorists, which holds that "an expression is *ḥaqīqah* if it signifies independently of context (*in dalla bi-lā qarīnah*) and *majāz* if it does not signify without context."[59] For Ibn Taymiyya, this distinction is meaningless since, he insists, there is no entirely context-free instance of *actual language use*. This does not negate the fact, as he explains in *Kitāb al-Īmān*, that "expressions in isolation can indeed be found in the works of lexicographers, but this is because these abstract expressions are understood by lexicographers to represent the common range of what native speakers mean in different utterances."[60] In other words, the mainstream *uṣūl al-fiqh* model regards the *ẓāhir* meaning as inhering in the texts themselves, and this *ẓāhir* meaning either coincides or does not coincide with the meaning determined, on the basis of contextual clues, to be that intended by the speaker. The apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of a text, on the mainstream model, can thus diverge from the intended meaning of the author. For Ibn Taymiyya, by contrast, texts cannot be said to possess or to convey any meaning whatsoever on their own, that is, as abstract entities divorced from the intentional (and contextualized) locutionary act of the speaker. Whatever speaker-intended meaning the context determines the speaker to have meant on a given occasion is, for Ibn Taymiyya, one and the same as the *ẓāhir* meaning of the text. In fact, even referring to it as the *ẓāhir* meaning *of the text*, as opposed to the *ẓāhir* meaning of the author that he intends to convey *through* the text, risks misrepresenting Ibn Taymiyya's position since, once again, any actual meaning (*maʿnā*) involved can only be that of a conscious agent (the speaker of an utterance or the author of a text) and not of the utterance or the text itself. This stance, in fact, corresponds perfectly with Ibn Taymiyya's consistent and rigorous distinction between what he regards as the theoretical constructs of the mind and the external facts of objective reality (a topic addressed at length in chapter 5). Though he does not say so himself (as far as I am aware), Ibn Taymiyya would probably dismiss the notion of a text holding a meaning entirely on its own (in isolation from the intent of its author) as a pure mental abstraction. Since the text did not write itself, it cannot properly be seen as a locus where meaning somehow resides in abstraction from the actual communicative process instantiated between a willful speaker and a conscious, recipient interlocutor.

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[59] Ibid., 99.

[60] Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Īmān*, 104 (also cited, with the translation given here, in Yunis Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 115).

Finally, we may compare Ibn Taymiyya's equation of *ẓāhir* and intended meaning with the mainstream *uṣūlī* taxonomy of *ẓāhir* and *mu'awwal* meanings. The mainstream taxonomy classifies as an "interpreted" or non-apparent (*mu'awwal*) meaning any meaning that is taken to be the one intended by the speaker but that (a) is not in accord with the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of a given text when viewed in isolation and (b) was only arrived at through the consideration of a "non-contiguous textual indicator elsewhere within the revelatory corpus."[61] In this schema, the *ẓāhir* meaning may eventually be put aside and the *mu'awwal* meaning identified as that intended by the speaker (and, thus, as the correct interpretation of the text). Ibn Taymiyya, however, seems to go so far as to identify the *ẓāhir* meaning of any text as whichever meaning happens to emerge once all other relevant revelatory data have been brought to bear—since, once again, he does not seem to concede any meaningful distinction between "apparent" (*ẓāhir*) meaning and intended meaning. He would thus seem to have no particular name or category for the meaning that seems to emerge from a text when considered in isolation, prior to an inductive investigation of the revealed texts as a whole.

2.1 *Ibn Taymiyya's Contextual* Ta'wīl *in Practice*

The foregoing principles of contextual interpretation, *tabādur*, and the identification of *ẓāhir* meaning with intended meaning apply to language use in general and represent Ibn Taymiyya's account of the intrinsic mechanism by which meanings are expressed via human language at all times and in all places. Islamic revelation, which represents an expression of meaning addressed to human beings in the particular language of Arabic, necessarily conforms to the same universal linguistic principles delineated above. That is, the texts of the Qurʾān and Sunna, like any other communication via human language, necessarily convey their substantive content through words (*alfāẓ*), the meanings of which are determined, in each and every instance, as a function of the immediate context (*qarāʾin*, *siyāq al-kalām*) as judged in light of the shared linguistic convention (*ʿurf*) of their original target audience, namely, the Prophet Muḥammad and his immediate Companions. We have seen that Ibn Taymiyya lays great stress on the fact that revelation, by its own declaration, is eminently clear (*mubīn*) and devoid of any ambiguity that would obscure its message or impede its communication to its intended recipients.[62] Given his theory of meaning and the preeminent role of context in it, Ibn Taymiyya understands the translucent clarity of revelation to rest on a further principle: namely, that the texts of revelation, taken collectively, always contain within them explicit indications of the meaning intended by "ambiguous" passages.[63] We may denote this principle by the (admittedly unwieldy) term "semantically explicit, self-contained intertextuality." Not only does this principle confer upon the revealed texts their signature clarity, but, in a major move Ibn Taymiyya makes against the rationalists, it also ensures that the texts remain fully independent of any external factor (particularly the deliverances of abstract rational speculation) in conveying the meanings they were intended to convey.

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[61] Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 51.

The way in which the principle of semantically explicit, self-contained intertextuality functions is best illustrated by examining instances of its application, instances in which Ibn Taymiyya attempts to sidestep the straightforward literal meaning of "problematic" texts while nevertheless adhering firmly to his linguistic principles and avoiding recourse to purely rational considerations. A simple example is the following *ḥadīth*, reported on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās: "The Black Stone is the right hand of God on earth; whoever shakes it and kisses it, it is as if he had shaken and kissed the right hand of God." Though Ibn Taymiyya rejects the authenticity of this report as a prophetic *ḥadīth*,[64] he nonetheless considers it a report whose literal wording, or obvious sense (*ẓāhir*), renders its intended meaning clear and thus stands in no need of an external factor—such as reason—to deflect it from its (putative) outward sense via *taʾwīl* (that is, in order to avoid the implication that the Black Stone constitutes a divine attribute, namely, God's hand).[65] In fact, this *ḥadīth*, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, is explicit (*ṣarīḥ*) in affirming that the Black Stone is *not* the hand of God. This is so because, first, the predicative statement "the Black Stone is the right hand of God" is restricted by the qualifier "on earth." Though Ibn Taymiyya does not say so explicitly, he implies that since it is known, on the basis of other texts, that God does not inhere in the earth in any manner, the qualification that the Black Stone is the right hand of God "on earth" immediately alerts the listener to the fact that the predication is not to be taken "literally." Second, we know the Black Stone is not the hand of God because the *ḥadīth* states explicitly that whoever greets (*ṣāfaḥa*; lit. "shakes the hand of") the Black Stone, it is *as if* (*fa-ka-annamā*) he had shaken the hand of God. And since it is known that the thing compared (*mushabbah*) in a simile is other than the object to which it is likened (*mushabbah bihi*), Ibn Taymiyya asserts that the *ḥadīth* is explicit (*ṣarīḥ*) in affirming that the act of greeting the Black Stone (the *mushabbah*) is not, in fact, synonymous with the act of shaking the right hand of God (the *mushabbah bihi*). This amounts to an explicit denial that the Black Stone is literally the right hand of God, be it on earth or elsewhere. For these reasons, the *ḥadīth* requires no *taʾwīl*, or figurative reinterpretation, at variance with its obvious sense (*ẓāhir*).[66] Ibn Taymiyya affirms that there are numerous such examples from the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth* in which the text itself makes it clear that the false (*bāṭil*) meaning is not the one intended. This relieves us of any need, in order to disavow this false meaning, for a "separate indicant or a figurative reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*) predicated on a deflection of the explicit verbal form (*lafẓ*) from its [naturally understood] import and connotation."[67] And while Ibn Taymiyya does not deny that reason, on its own, might also recognize that it is impossible for a created element of the world (such as a black stone) to be an attribute of a transcendent and perfect God, we are in no way dependent on reason's judgement of this impossibility for our knowledge that this is what *revelation* is affirming.

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[62] Ibn Taymiyya's theory of the clarity of revelation and the necessarily unambiguous nature of its propositional content mirrors, in numerous interesting respects, the views of the major Muʿtazilī theologian, Shāfiʿī jurist, and systematizer of Muʿtazilī thought, al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025). See, e.g., ʿAbd al-Jabbār's argument for the linguistic univocality of the Qurʾān in Schöck, *Koranexegese, Grammatik und Logik*, 382–393. See also Vishanoff, *Formation*, 2.

[63] See, for instance, *Darʾ*, 5:239, line 18 to 5:240, line 2, where Ibn Taymiyya states, "*al-tafsīr alladhī bihi yuʿrafu al-ṣawāb qad dhukira mā yadullu ʿalayhi fī nafs al-khiṭāb immā maqrūnan bihi wa-immā fī naṣṣ ākhar*." The principle of intertextual clarification—in which one text of revelation elucidates another, resulting in the clarity (*bayān*) of revelation as a whole—goes back to al-Shāfiʿī, who, in his *Risāla*, sets out five discrete ways in which the meaning of an initially ambiguous Qurʾānic passage can be clarified by appeal to various forms of intertextual evidence. See Vishanoff, *Formation*, 42–44.

[64] On the status of this *ḥadīth*, see *Darʾ*, 5:236, lines 8–9; 5:239, lines 5–6; 3:384, line 9; and the editor's note at 3:384, n. 2. The *ḥadīth* appears in various versions and has alternatively been categorized as fair (*ḥasan*), weak but with corroborating narrations (*ḍaʿīf lahu shawāhid*), and authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) but as a saying of Ibn ʿAbbās, not the Prophet.

It is important to reiterate, with regard to the foregoing *ḥadīth* and similar texts, that Ibn Taymiyya is by no means claiming that all linguistic utterances are to be taken "literally." Rather, he is saying that in all instances, the correct intended meaning is inherent in the texts themselves and (readily) discernible from them. This eliminates the need for arguments and would-be proofs of a purely speculative or theoretical nature derived from sources extrinsic to revelation. It bears to be stressed that when Ibn Taymiyya insists upon a firm adherence to the "*lafẓ*" (that is, to the explicit verbal form) of a text, he is not advocating anything like a strict "literalism." For Ibn Taymiyya, the *lafẓ* is never conceived of as a bare word, primordially assigned to denote a specific, disembodied "primary" meaning. Rather, what Ibn Taymiyya refers to as the "*lafẓ*" is always the *lafẓ* (1) as embedded in a given context, (2) as understood according to the linguistic conventions of the Salaf, and (3) as interpreted in light of other relevant texts. There is simply no such thing as a *lafẓ* in the abstract since no *lafẓ*, for Ibn Taymiyya, possesses any determinable meaning whatsoever outside a particular, contextualized instance of use. In other words, he rejects the meaning–use distinction altogether. As we have seen above with the example of the word "hand" (*yad*), Ibn Taymiyya does not admit of any preponderant (*rājiḥ*) or "literal" (*ḥaqīqa*) meaning that can simply be assumed by default unless a rational (or even a textual) objection arises to alert us that such meaning cannot have been the one meant. So, while Ibn Taymiyya certainly purports to be a strict *textualist*, he is by no means a strict *literalist* in the way this term is normally understood.[68] The true literalist would be the one who claimed that words have primary, disembodied default meanings, then insisted that a word can be taken to denote only this one meaning whenever and wherever it is used, regardless of such factors as context, convention, and intertextuality (let alone the presence of a putative rational objection). Literalism in this sense does not reflect the position of Ibn Taymiyya and, after him, of his student, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya; rather, it seems to come somewhat closer to that of the Ẓāhirīs, whose approach appears, at least in certain respects, to be the diametric opposite of Ibn Taymiyya's. Whereas Ibn Taymiyya proposes a heavily pragmatic model in which context—linguistic and paralinguistic—and the intent of the speaker are central, the Ẓāhirī model has been characterized as one that operates primarily in reverse. According to Yunis Ali, for instance, the Ẓāhirī model is one that "is based primarily on the non-pragmatic givens of the language and stresses the predetermined conventions of the language which are encoded in the linguistic structure of the texts as the essential, and perhaps the only requirements for communication," while "extra-linguistic contexts are generally ignored and the inferential capacity of the hearer has almost no role to play in interpretation."[69] Recent work by Amr Osman, however, has nuanced the notion of Ẓāhirī thought as unremittingly "literalist" in this sense, suggesting "textualism" instead as a more accurate description of the premises, methodologies, and aims of the school.[70] My analysis of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* has led me to a similar conclusion regarding the "textualism" of Ibn Taymiyya, who has long been described—and decried—as a simplistic "literalist" in both Muslim and non-Muslim sources.[71]

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[65] "*min al-akhbār mā yakūnu ẓāhiruhu yubayyinu al-murād bihi lā yaḥtāju ilā dalīl yaṣrifuhu ʿan ẓāhirihi.*" *Darʾ*, 3:384, lines 5–6.

[66] "*lam yaḥtaj ilā taʾwīl yukhālifu ẓāhirahu.*" *Darʾ*, 3:384, lines 12–13.

[67] "*fa-lā yaḥtāju nafy dhālika ilā dalīl munfaṣil wa-lā taʾwīl yukhriju al-lafẓ ʿan mūjibihi wa-muqtaḍāhu.*" *Darʾ*, 3:385, lines 1–2. For Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of the Black Stone *ḥadīth*, see, inter alia, *Darʾ*, 3:384, line 5 to 3:385, line 2.

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[68] Here again the parallel with al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī's views is striking. See Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 52 and 52, n. 93.

2.2 Ta'wīl *on the Basis of Intertextuality*

We can gain further insight into Ibn Taymiyya's "contextual *taʾwīl*"—particularly the aspect of it that I have referred to as the principle of intertextuality—by examining instances of *taʾwīl* by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal that Ibn Taymiyya cites approvingly as paradigmatic examples of proper engagement with the texts. Ibn Taymiyya cites one such example from Ibn Ḥanbal's purported work, *al-Radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-l-zanādiqa*. The example involves Ibn Ḥanbal's response to those among the "Jahmiyya" who deny that God is distinct and separate from (*mubāyin li*) creation, claiming instead that He is everywhere (that is, in all places such that no place is ever devoid of Him and He is never in one place to the exclusion of another). The implication is that God Himself—that is, God in His very essence—is not distinct from the world but rather inheres in every place within it. Those holding this view find support in a "literal" reading of Q. *al-Anʿām* 6:3: "And He is God in the heavens and on the earth,"[72] interpreting this to mean that God inheres with His essence in the heavens and the earth. Ibn Ḥanbal's ultimate response to this contention is that the true meaning of this verse is that He is the God *of those* in the heavens and the God *of those* on the earth, while He Himself is above the throne, encompassing *with His knowledge* everything beneath the throne (that is, all of creation). No place is devoid of God's knowledge, nor is His knowledge in one place to the exclusion of another.

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[69] Yunis Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 9. For useful summary treatments of literalism and Ẓāhirī thought, particularly in the context of legal hermeneutics, see Yunis Ali, 130 ff.; Vishanoff, *Formation*, 66–108 (esp. 88–102); and Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 146–174, esp. 150 ff. Roger Arnaldez's *Grammaire et théologie chez Ibn Ḥazm de Cordoue* remains an excellent resource, particularly for Ẓāhirī thought as developed by its famous latter-day representative, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064). The most recent comprehensive study of the history and doctrines of the Ẓāhirī school—and the first monograph on the topic since Goldziher's 1884 work, *Die Ẓâhiriten*—is Amr Osman, *Ẓāhirī Madhhab*.

[70] See Osman, *Ẓāhirī Madhhab*, 171–224.

[71] In this vein, see also Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 2 for the observation that "those Muslim groups and tendencies commonly called 'literalists' (*ḥashwiyya*, *ẓāhiriyya*, *salafiyya* and so on) are simply applying rules concerning non-deviation from the literal meaning with a greater level of rigidity than other so-called 'non-literalists'. The various groups are not, in truth, operating in a different hermeneutic context."

[72] "*wa-huwa Llāhu fī l-samāwāti wa-fī l-arḍ*" (Q. *al-Anʿām* 6:3).

Yet how does Ibn Ḥanbal arrive at this conclusion, which seems to represent a rather extreme particularization (*takhṣīṣ*) of the overt import of the verse (in fact, it would seem to contradict the most "literal" meaning of the verse and to constitute a straightforward instance of the kind of *taʾwīl* that Ibn Taymiyya rejects)? In establishing the correct meaning of this verse, Ibn Ḥanbal makes a textual appeal to numerous other verses describing God as being "in the heavens" (*fī al-samāʾ*)[73] and "above" (*fawq*)—in other words, not inherent in creation in any way.[74] He also appeals to a number of verses showing that everything "down" (*asfal*) is blameworthy and ignoble (*madhmūm*), such that in addition to being ontologically impossible, it would also be morally unbefitting for God to be "down here" on earth.[75] He combines this with the common sense appeal that we know instinctively (that is, by the *fiṭra*) that God, in His exaltedness and majesty, could not possibly inhere in numerous filthy and execrable places, such as our innards or those of a pig or other such squalid locations. Thus, Ibn Ḥanbal concludes, it is inconceivable that God should inhere in the earth (*fī al-arḍ*) or in any part of creation. Consequently, a verse like Q. *al-Anʿām* 6:3: "And He is God in the heavens and on the earth" must be taken to mean that He is the God of those that are in the heavens (such as the angels) and of those that are on the earth (such as humans, birds, and animals). Yet His lordship over them entails that although He is separate and distinct from them, He has full knowledge of them. This is confirmed by Q. *al-Ṭalāq* 65:12: "that you may know that God has power over all things and that God encompasses all things with His knowledge."

The foregoing instance of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's use of *taʾwīl* provides an example of what I have called the principle of intertextuality. While it is true that Ibn Taymiyya is normally at pains to show that single verses and *ḥadīth* contain their own self-exonerating elements of clarification, he nevertheless allows, as we see here, that disparate texts of revelation can elucidate one another.

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[73] He interprets this to mean not contained in the physical heavens but, rather, distinct from all created things (that is, from the creation as a whole) and distinctly above it, reading "*fī al-samāʾ*"—derived from the verb *samā, yasmū* (to be high, lofty)—in this case as synonymous with an expression like "*fī al-ʿuluww*."

[74] These verses are Q. *al-Baqara* 2:29, *Āl ʿImrān* 3:55, *al-Nisāʾ* 4:158, *al-Anʿām* 6:18, *al-Naḥl* 16:50, *Fāṭir* 35:10, *al-Mulk* 67:16–17, and *al-Maʿārij* 70:4.

[75] See, for example, Q. *Fuṣṣilat* 41:29 and *al-Tīn* 95:5.

This is precisely why I refer to his theory as one of "intertextuality." The critical point for Ibn Taymiyya, ultimately, is that the texts of revelation, taken collectively and considered in light of one other, are always fully independent and self-sufficient in conveying—explicitly—the meanings we are intended to take from them. This premise explains why I qualify Ibn Taymiyya's principle of intertextuality as being both *semantically explicit*, as all meanings are indicated in an explicit (*ṣarīḥ*) fashion when revelation is considered as a whole, and *self-contained*, as the collectivity of revealed texts stands in no need of an independent source, such as speculative reason, to endorse, qualify, or modify any of the (explicitly indicated) meanings contained within them.

2.3 Taʾwīl *on the Basis of the Positions of the Salaf*

In addition to immediate context and the principle of intertextuality, Ibn Taymiyya recognizes a third authoritative determinant of meaning for revealed texts, namely, the reported statements (*aqwāl*) of the Companions and the Salaf, especially when these statements converge to form a consensus (*ijmāʿ*) or quasi-consensus. Thus, we sometimes find the "*taʾwīl*" of a verse explicitly justified on the basis that it is from the "*aqwāl* of the Salaf" or because the Salaf were unanimous in interpreting the verse this way. We may cite as an example Q. *al-Ḥadīd* 57:4: "And He is with you wheresoever you may be."[76] Ibn Taymiyya cites Abū ʿUmar al-Ṭalamankī (d. 429/1038), who, in his book *al-Wuṣūl ilā maʿrifat al-uṣūl*, reports a "consensus among the Muslims of *ahl al-sunna*" that this verse, as well as similar verses in the Qurʾān (*wa-naḥw dhālika min al-Qurʾān*), refers not to God's essence or very self (*dhāt*), which is "above [and not inside] the heavens," but rather to His knowledge.[77] A similar verse is Q. *al-Mujādila* 58:7: "Never is there a secret parley among three but that He is their fourth."[78] On the meaning of this verse, Ibn Taymiyya cites Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463/1071), who states that "the learned (*ʿulamāʾ*) among the Companions and the Successors, from whom knowledge of *taʾwīl* is taken, affirm unanimously, with respect to the *taʾwīl* of this verse, that God is upon His throne and that His *knowledge* is in all places, and no one whose opinion is deemed authoritative has contradicted them in this."[79] This understanding is further supported by a statement reported of Mālik b. Anas, as well as of numerous other authorities both before and after him, through authentic chains of transmission (*asānīd ṣaḥīḥa*) to the effect that "God is in the heavens (*fī al-samāʾ*),[80] but His knowledge is in all places."[81]

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[76] "*wa-huwa maʿakum aynamā kuntum*."

[77] *Darʾ*, 6:250, line 15 to 6:251, line 3.

[78] "*mā yakūnu min najwā thalāthatin illā huwa rābiʿuhum*."

[79] "*ajmaʿa ʿulamāʾ al-ṣaḥāba wa-l-tābiʿīn alladhīna ḥumila ʿanhum al-taʾwīl qālū fī taʾwīl qawlihi taʿālā … huwa ʿalā al-ʿarsh wa-ʿilmuhu fī kulli makān wa-mā khālafahum fī dhālika aḥad yuḥtajju bi-qawlihi*." *Darʾ*, 6:255, lines 7–11.

As we have seen, the specific interpretations cited above with regard to verses stating that God "is God in the heavens and the earth" are ultimately justified by appeal to the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the Salaf. But if this is the case, then we may well raise the question, How did the Salaf know that this was the meaning? Was it because the Prophet had explicitly informed them that this was the correct interpretation of these verses? Was it on account of their preeminent understanding of the Arabic language that they could understand this meaning from the language of the verses directly and immediately? Was it by comparing, even implicitly, such verses with other verses affirming God's transcendence and understanding these in light of their (the Salaf's) emerging appreciation of the overall ontology and theology of the Qurʾān? Though Ibn Taymiyya does not address these questions directly in the *Darʾ* (at least not in the context of the verses under consideration), it would seem safe to assume that any of the three, or a combination of them, could be at work in the case of any given report of the Salaf's positions (*aqwāl*). Yet, however the Salaf came to endorse a particular view, the point for Ibn Taymiyya is that once we ascertain that a given understanding or interpretation of revelation has been transmitted to us from the Salaf (*maʾthūr ʿan al-salaf*), their opinion becomes a binding and authoritative determinant of the textual meaning of that verse. If the Salaf are known to have understood a verse "non-literally," such as their understanding that only God's knowledge and not God Himself is "in the heavens and on earth," then such is the legitimate meaning of the verse. If, on the other hand, the Salaf are known to have understood a verse according to its more "literal," or *ḥaqīqa*, sense (*ḥaqīqa* as understood by the mainstream, that is, not according to Ibn Taymiyya's contextual construal of it), such as their affirmation that God is indeed "above" the heavens "*ḥaqīqatan*," then such is likewise the only legitimate interpretation of the verse in question. What Ibn Taymiyya opposes is that latter-day philosophers or theologians should put forth a "metaphorical" or otherwise non-apparent interpretation based on factors extrinsic to the revealed texts, such as speculative rational (or, as Ibn Taymiyya might say, "putatively" rational) considerations, particularly if these contradict the straightforward construal of a given text as transmitted on the authority of the Salaf.

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[80] Ibn Taymiyya, as mentioned above, explains the phrase "*fī al-samāʾ*" (in the heavens) as being synonymous with "*fī al-ʿuluww*," stressing that God is not *in* the heavens—that is, inherent in and confined by the created universe—but rather *above* them, that is, beyond and transcendent to creation. The main reason for stressing that God Himself is "above the heavens" while His *knowledge* is "in all places" is to avoid the theologically (and rationally) precarious suggestion that God could inhere in, and thus be limited by, His creation (though His knowledge nonetheless encompasses all things). The objection of the later Ashʿarīs that holding God to be "above" creation would entail corporealism (*tajsīm*) by attributing to Him spatial location (*jiha*) is a related but separate point with which we deal more closely in the following chapter.

[81] See *Darʾ*, 6:261, line 19 to 6:262, line 4.

3 The Salaf and the Authority of Their Linguistic Convention (*ʿurf*)

In the preceding section, we examined Ibn Taymiyya's views on the centrality of context in determining the meaning of linguistic utterances in general and of the texts of revelation in particular. I have also mentioned another crucial element of Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutics, namely, that of the larger, well-known linguistic habits and conventions (*ʿurf*) of the speech community in which a given utterance is made.[82] Ibn Taymiyya insists that any utterance directed to a community of people is necessarily subject to due consideration of both context and convention. This principle applies equally to the words of divine revelation, for even though the source of the linguistic product in this case is God, He nevertheless addresses His revelation to human beings by clothing it in a particular human language. That language, like any other, operates within a living speech community, and revelation addresses that community in light of the community's established linguistic conventions at the time revelation supervenes upon it. This is simply another way of saying that revelation came to the Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions in their own language and that if it were to be clear and manifest (*mubīn*) to them—which the Qurʾān persistently affirms that it is—then it could only be sent to them in conformity with their established patterns of language use. This fact lies at the base of Ibn Taymiyya's insistence that revelation always be understood and interpreted according to the known linguistic conventions of the initial recipient community. Indeed, linguistic convention (*ʿurf*) forms the larger backdrop against which the previously discussed principle of contextual interpretation is possible. My ability to judge from context that a statement such as "Can you please give me a hand with the yard work?" is really a request for assistance (and not my actual hand) is a result of my broader familiarity with the conventions of current-day English speakers. It is this familiarity that allows me to determine successfully that in such a context, "hand" means "help." Absent sufficient familiarity with the larger linguistic convention of the relevant speech community, one would have no grounds for selecting which of the possible meanings of a word is intended in a given context.

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[82] The notion of the "normative speech of the Arabs" as an important element of the hermeneutic endeavor, one that is central to Ibn Taymiyya, goes at least as far back as the *tafsīr* of Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767). Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 84. On Muqātil's *tafsīr* more generally, see Versteegh, *Arabic Linguistic Tradition*, 11–22.

Yet, in some cases, revelation impinges upon and modifies the previously established linguistic convention and related conceptual categories, shifting the meanings and implications of existing terms, altering their moral and ethical content (or redefining them altogether), or introducing new terms and usages that inaugurate fresh conventions in the language that correspond to novel conceptual innovations.[83] This linguistic convention that is proper to revelation is technically known as *ʿurf sharʿī*, or the "convention of revelation," and stands beside the general communal convention discussed above.[84] An example of this revelational convention (*ʿurf sharʿī*) is the word *ṣalāh*, which, before the advent of revelation, designated any type of supplication but was reassigned by the Qurʾān to refer specifically to the well-known Muslim ritual prayer. Because revelation has impinged upon and modified a previous linguistic convention, we must consider not only the wider context of the pre-existing convention that formed the linguistic backdrop of the revealed texts but also the larger worldview of revelation, taking into account new meanings, terms, and conventions that revelation itself has introduced. Ibn Taymiyya's key contention, however, remains the same: namely, that in all cases, the meaning of revelation can be determined in a self-referentially independent manner, that is, on the basis of the texts themselves as interpreted in light of the larger linguistic convention and the specific terminological and conceptual innovations inaugurated by revelation. We must therefore judge any putative conclusions of abstract reasoning in light of what we have determined revelation, on its own terms, to be saying rather than reinterpret revelation to conform to what are thought to be the conclusions of independent reason. I speak deliberately here of the "putative" conclusions of abstract reasoning and of what are "thought" to be the conclusions of independent reason since, for Ibn Taymiyya, pure reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*) will never judge to be true any proposition that stands in conflict with the texts of the Qurʾān or the authenticated Sunna.

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[83] The definitive works on this topic remain Toshihiko Izutsu's three masterly studies, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾan*, *The Structure of Ethical Terms in the Quran*, and *God and Man in the Qurʾan*. See also Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*.

[84] For a more detailed discussion of *ʿurf sharʿī*, or the "convention of revelation," see Vishanoff, *Formation*, *passim*; Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 37–39, 176–194, and *passim*; and Weiss, *The Search for God's Law*, 138–143, 449.

3.1 *The Salaf's Authority in Knowledge and the Understanding of Revelation*

Central to Ibn Taymiyya's worldview is the notion that the Salaf were not only the most pious of Muslim generations but also the most knowledgeable and possessed of the best and most perfect understanding of the faith, quite apart from their exemplary practice thereof. In establishing this view, he appeals, inter alia, to a statement by ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd, who describes the Companions as "having the purest hearts, possessing the deepest knowledge, and exhibiting the least unnatural strain and affectation (*takalluf*)" of all Muslim generations.[85] Ibn Taymiyya holds these three qualities—purity of heart, clarity and depth of intellect, and, as a natural accompaniment to both, straightforwardness and a lack of affectation—in very high esteem, and, as demonstrated in this study, he places them at the center of his entire epistemic system. A further statement in deference to the Companions' perspicacity, paraphrased from al-Shāfiʿī's *Risāla*, declares that the Companions were "superior to us in every rational matter, science, and merit and in every means by which knowledge is gained or truth is apprehended; what they opine for us is of greater worth than what we opine for ourselves."[86] Ibn Taymiyya adds to these accolades his own contention that "every person knows that the Companions, the Successors, and the Successors of the Successors are the most perfectly gifted in intellect of all people."[87] And it is precisely these first three generations, from the Companions to the Successors of the Successors, that Ibn Taymiyya defines as the "Salaf" and whose linguistic convention and understanding of the texts he takes as uniquely authoritative for all later generations.

As we saw briefly in chapter 3, Ibn Taymiyya was particularly concerned to defend the unique normative status of the Salaf and early authorities in light of the later contention that they were content merely to believe in and uphold the language of the revealed texts (*alfāẓ al-nuṣūṣ*) while turning away from a deep contemplation and profound understanding of their meanings.[88] This assumption about the Salaf and their beliefs eventually led to the assertion that the later scholars (the *khalaf*) had a greater knowledge and deeper understanding of the revealed texts than the Salaf, whose approach—based, allegedly, on an unreflective affirmationism devoid of sophistication and nuance—represented merely the "safer" way.[89] Ibn Taymiyya asserts that later thinkers were induced to adopt such a position precisely because of their belief that a proper understanding of the texts required the extensive use of rationalistic *taʾwīl* (in the third, technical sense discussed above), an enterprise of which the authorities of the Salaf were found to be conspicuously innocent. These later thinkers, Ibn Taymiyya explains, tended to view the Salaf as being aware that numerous words in revelation could carry many different meanings, but, since there was a danger of error in assigning one particular meaning to a verse over another, they preferred to follow the safer (*aslam*) way by upholding the verbal form (*lafẓ*) of the texts while refraining from definitively endorsing any particular interpretation of their meaning (*maʿnā*): in other words, they practiced *tafwīḍ*.[90] Ibn Taymiyya is keen to exonerate the Salaf and the early authorities of this charge by demonstrating that they (1) affirmed in a straightforward manner the divine attributes specified in the texts; (2) contemplated and deeply understood the full import of these texts; and (3) actively refuted the methods and the discrete views of the negationists (*nufāh*) once these began to crop up,[91] demonstrating them to be contrary both to the texts of revelation (as authentically understood by the earliest generations) and to the dictates of sound reason. Consequently, Ibn Taymiyya considers the way of the Salaf to be both the safest (*aslam*) and the most intellectually rigorous (*aʿlam wa-aḥkam*) at the same time.[92]

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[85] "*abarr hādhihi al-umma qulūban wa-aʿmaquhum ʿilman wa-aqalluhum takallufan.*" *Darʾ*, 5:69, lines 13–15.

[86] "*innahum fawqanā fī kulli ʿaql wa-ʿilm wa-faḍl wa-sabab yunālu bihi ʿilm aw yudraku bihi ṣawāb wa-raʾyuhum lanā khayr min raʾyinā li-anfusinā.*" *Darʾ*, 5:73, lines 1–3.

[87] "*kullu aḥad yaʿlamu anna ʿuqūl al-ṣaḥāba wa-l-tābiʿīn wa-tābiʿihim akmal ʿuqūl al-nās.*" *Darʾ*, 5:72, lines 1–2.

[88] *Darʾ*, 5:378, lines 6–8.

In establishing what he purported to be the early community's full-fledged and consistent affirmationism, Ibn Taymiyya appeals to a number of early *tafsīr* works that have the advantage, for him, of being based primarily on the specific interpretations transmitted from (*maʾthūra ʿan*) the Prophet, as well as the Companions and Successors—precisely those generations he considered uniquely authoritative.[93] Ibn Taymiyya contends that such works of *tafsīr*—in addition to other early works of Sunna (*al-kutub al-muṣannafa fī al-sunna*) containing reports from the Prophet, the Companions, and the Successors—unambiguously establish the universal affirmationism (*ithbāt*) of the early community.[94] In fact, he reports that their affirmationism is established through an overwhelming abundance of reports from the *tafsīr* literature and from other works that were transmitted in a *mutawātir* fashion and in which one cannot find so much as a "single letter" (*ḥarf wāḥid*) that agrees with the position of the early negationists.[95] The combination of these reports attests to a consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the Salaf on the necessity of full affirmationism with respect to the divine attributes. Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya contends, the Qurʾān itself does not contain a single explicit denial of any discrete attribute of God.[96] What it does contain are verses denying that God has any likeness (*mithl*) or equal (*kufuʾ*), particularly the verses "There is none like unto Him"[97] and "There is none comparable unto Him."[98] Yet these verses, Ibn Taymiyya contends, do not deny the very existence of God's attributes; rather, they deny any essential similarity or likeness (*mumāthala*) between the attributes of God and those of created beings.[99]

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[89] This is often expressed in the pithy formula "*ṭarīqat al-khalaf aḥkam* (or '*aʿlam*') *wa-ṭarīqat al-salaf aslam*" (the way of the *khalaf* is more exact [or "more learned"], and/but the way of the Salaf is safer). See *Darʾ*, 5:378, lines 9–10.

[90] *Darʾ*, 5:378, lines 15–18.

[91] All earlier and later (non-Muʿtazilī) *mutakallimūn* in fact agree that the Companions and Salaf performed this function—and were right to do so—in the face of the early sects inspired by the likes of Jahm b. Ṣafwān, including the Muʿtazila. An Ashʿarī, for instance, would hold the same opinion here as Ibn Taymiyya and congratulate the Salaf for honorably discharging such a vital task. But from an Ashʿarī perspective, the *taʾwīl* engaged in by the later Ashʿarī school (that of the so-called *mutaʾakhkhirūn*) has nothing to do with the brazen negationism of the early sectarians. For his part, Ibn Taymiyya insists that early negationism and later Ashʿarī *kalām* share, in fact, many of the same operative principles and assumptions, just that the Ashʿarīs do not apply them as broadly as the Muʿtazila, who, in turn, do not go quite as far in their negationism as the earlier sectarians or the philosophers.

[92] *Darʾ*, 5:378, line 19 to 5:379, line 4. For some examples Ibn Taymiyya gives of how the Salaf were aware of and addressed a number of the theological issues raised by later groups, albeit with terminology different from the technical language of the later *mutakallimūn*, see *Darʾ*, 8:53.

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[93] He mentions specifically the early works of ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd (d. 249/863), al-Ḥusayn ("Sunayd") b. Dāwūd (d. 226/840 or 841), ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/827), and Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/812), then the *tafsīr*s of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ibrāhīm Duḥaym (d. 245/859), Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327/938), Ibn al-Mundhir (d. ca. 318/930), Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 363/974), Jaʿfar b. Ḥayyān ("Abū al-Shaykh") al-Aṣbahānī (d. 369/979), and Abū Bakr b. Mardawayhi (d. 410/1020) and similar works subsequent to these, such as the *tafsīr*s of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Rāhawayhi (d. 238/853), Baqī b. Makhlad (d. 276/889), "and others." For this list, see *Darʾ*, 2:21, line 10 to 2:22, line 5. See also *Darʾ*, 7:108, line 16 to 7:109, line 5 for a much more extensive list, as well as Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima*, 36–37, 51, 62–64.

[94] See *Darʾ*, 2:20 ff. for the explicitly affirmationist statements of numerous early authorities. It is on the basis of these and similar statements that Ibn Taymiyya identifies those early figures whom he calls to witness in defining the approach of "the Salaf and early authorities" (*al-salaf wa-l-aʾimma*).

[95] See *Darʾ*, 7:108, lines 11–13, where Ibn Taymiyya speaks of "*al-tafāsīr al-thābita al-mutawātira ʿan al-ṣaḥāba wa-l-tābiʿīn*" and "*al-nuqūl al-mutawātira al-mustafīḍa ʿan al-ṣaḥāba wa-l-tābiʿīn fī ghayr al-tafsīr*."

[96] Though he does not say so explicitly in this particular passage, it is clear that Ibn Taymiyya means that the Qurʾān does not deny that God possesses what he refers to as "attributes of perfection" (*ṣifāt al-kamāl*). It does, however, deny God's possession of attributes that entail deficiency or imperfection, such as the attribute of injustice, which is negated of God on several occasions in verses such as Q. *Fuṣṣilat* 41:46: "*wa-mā rabbuka bi-ẓallāmin lil-ʿabīd*" (And your Lord is in no wise unjust to [His] slaves). See additional references at p. 36, n. 58 above.

[97] "*laysa ka-mithlihi shayʾ*" (Q. *al-Shūrā* 42:11).

[98] "*wa-lam yakun lahu kufuwan aḥad*" (Q. *al-Ikhlāṣ* 112:4).

4 Analysis of Terms to Detect and Correct for Semantic Shift

In chapter 2, we encountered a quotation attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal[100] to the effect that those who proffer abusive interpretations of scripture and false religious doctrines "discourse on God and the Book of God with no knowledge and speak in vague and ambiguous terms (*yatakallamūna bi-l-mutashābih min al-kalām*), fooling thereby the ignorant among men."[101] As it turns out, a significant portion of Ibn Taymiyya's critique against the philosophers and theologians (Muʿtazilī and later Ashʿarī) is directed against their (mis)use of language, a task he notes al-Ghazālī had undertaken before him.[102] Throughout the *Darʾ*, Ibn Taymiyya consistently inveighs against the use of "vague and ambiguous terms" (*alfāẓ mujmala mutashābiha*) and, as mentioned earlier, goes so far as to state that "the majority of disagreements among rational thinkers are due to an equivocity of terms"[103]—a state of affairs that results in the untold corruption (*fasād*) of both reason and religion. In fact, he states, every heretical innovation (*bidʿa*) in belief and every alleged conflict between reason and revelation can essentially be traced back to the use of vague and ambiguous terms, terms that carry a range of various meanings and implications that are often not fully understood or clearly conceptualized by those employing them. Such terms—complete with the implicit meanings and assumptions they carry—are accepted because of the truth they contain, but they end up serving as the basis for an eventual contradiction with revelation on account of the falsehood they also contain, falsehood that most people are unable to detect because of the multi-layered ambiguity inherent in such terms.[104] The trouble, according to Ibn Taymiyya, lies in the fact that people adopt such terms wholesale without careful analyzing their various meanings, then simply affirm or negate the term as such, along with the different meanings and implications attached to it, rather than first analyzing the term meticulously—or "critiquing" it, as one might say today—then judging the truth or falsehood of each individual meaning separately.[105] As a result of this rampant terminological confusion, and because revelation is primarily a phenomenon of language (a revealed text) and rational discourse itself can only be conducted through the use of language, Ibn Taymiyya is of the view that a great many of the philosophical and theological issues debated—as well as the (in his view abusive) interpretations often given in order to make revelation concord with the putatively rational conclusions reached through such debates—can, in fact, be resolved through a careful, methodical dissection of both the various terms used in revelation and the terms used to express the rational arguments that are allegedly in conflict with revelation. Once the various meanings implied in a given term have been patiently sifted and the measure of truth or falsehood of each meaning—as judged by (sound) reason and (authentic) revelation—has been clarified, then the doubts and confusions (*shubuhāt*) surrounding a given question can be cleared up, whereupon the alleged conflict between reason and revelation is revealed to have been a mere chimera.[106]

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[99] *Darʾ*, 7:111, lines 2–9. For a more extensive treatment of Ibn Taymiyya's conception of what it means for there to be "nothing like unto God," see *Darʾ*, 5:83–85.

[100] See pp. 115–116 above.

[101] For the original of this quotation, see, inter alia, *Darʾ*, 1:221, line 11 to 1:222, line 2.

[102] See, for instance, *Darʾ*, 6:295, lines 4–5, where he mentions al-Ghazālī "and others."

[103] "*akthar ikhtilāf al-ʿuqalāʾ min jihat ishtirāk al-asmāʾ*." *Darʾ*, 1:233, lines 5–6 and 1:299, lines 3–4. See also *Darʾ*, 1:274, line 18 to 1:275, line 3, where Ibn Taymiyya states that authentic rational proofs or indicants (*adilla*) can never contradict one another and that later theologians who claim an equivalence, or equipollence, of proofs (*takāfuʾ al-adilla*) or who experience perplexity (*ḥayra*) over an issue do so only because of their faulty reasoning and inference (*istidlāl*)—owing either to their personal inability or to the invalidity of their arguments—and that "one of the greatest causes of this is vague terms [that carry] ambiguous meaning" (*min aʿẓam asbāb dhālika al-alfāẓ al-mujmala allatī tashtabihu maʿānīhā*). (See index of Arabic passages for original passage paraphrased here.)

But what is the origin of such doubts and confusions (*shubuhāt*)? Ibn Taymiyya explains that the *shubuhāt* in question most often arise when the experts of a given discipline adopt common words as technical terms through which they communicate with one another, in the manner of craftsmen who use everyday words in a specific technical sense when referring to particular aspects of their trade. Such terms, Ibn Taymiyya explains, are agreed upon through a particular group convention (*alfāẓ ʿurfiyya ʿurfan khāṣṣan*), though what this group means by these terms is different from what the terms are understood to mean in the original linguistic convention of the larger speech community (*ghayr al-mafhūm minhā fī aṣl al-lugha*). As an example, we may cite the term *jism* ("body"), which is used in revelation in accordance with the normal linguistic convention in reference to, say, the body of a man or an animal.[107] The word *jism* is not used in revelation with reference to God, by way of either affirmation or negation, but when the philosophers apply it to God (by way of negation), they do so in a manner that departs from the acknowledged conventional meaning of the term. That is, they use the word in accordance with their particular convention (*ʿurf khāṣṣ*) that defines "body" as any entity of which it is possible to predicate distinct attributes (that is, attributes that are distinct from one another and from the essence of the entity in which they inhere). For instance, maintaining that God is not a "body" (*jism*) is true and valid according to the linguistic convention of the Arabs, since the word *jism* as used in the Qurʾān and in Arab linguistic convention has very specific meanings, none of which are applicable to God. But when the philosophers say that God is not a "*jism*" and mean this according to their technical use of the term (which is wide-ranging and essentially includes any entity of which it is possible to predicate attributes or qualities), then negating that God is a "*jism*"—*when defined in this manner*—indeed leads to a contradiction with revelation. This is so because when the philosophers negate God's being a "*jism*," they are actually negating a great deal more than what the word as used in the Qurʾān and according to the linguistic convention of the Arabs actually means.

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[104] See *Darʾ*, 1:208, line 15 to 1:209, line 2.

[105] See *Darʾ*, 9:152, lines 14–17.

[106] *Darʾ*, 4:227, lines 9–12.

[107] The word *jism* (pl. *ajsām*) appears twice in the Qurʾān, at Q. *al-Baqara* 2:247 and *al-Munāfiqūn* 63:4. Two other common terms for "body" are also mentioned in the Qurʾān:

Such vague and ambiguous terms, according to Ibn Taymiyya, fall into two main categories. The first category includes words that are used both in revelation and in common everyday speech but that the philosophers (and *mutakallimūn*) employ in a modified technical sense. This technical usage results in ambiguity and confusion (*ishtibāh wa-ijmāl*), particularly when a direct appeal is made to revelation in support of the philosophical views expressed by means of the terms in question. This phenomenon is clear from the example of the word *jism* ("body") above.[108] The second category of vague and ambiguous terms consists of words that do not appear in revelation but that do exist in the everyday language of the Arabs, albeit, once more, with widely shared conventional meanings that are radically at odds with the technical definitions given to them by later philosophers and theologians. Examples of such terms include words like *tarkīb* (composition), *juzʾ* (part), *iftiqār* (dependence), and *ṣūra* (image, form). Additional terms Ibn Taymiyya cites in this category include much of the basic vocabulary of philosophical discourse: *jawhar* (substance), *ʿaraḍ* (accident), *dhāt* (essence), *ṣifa* (attribute), *taḥayyuz* (occupying space), *jiha* (directionality or spatial location), *ʿilla* (cause), *maʿlūl*

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the word *jasad* (pl. *ajsād*) appears four times, at Q. *al-Aʿrāf* 7:148, *Ṭā Hā* 20:88, *al-Anbiyāʾ* 21:8, and *Ṣād* 38:34, and the word *badan* (pl. *abdān*) appears once, at Q. *Yūnus* 10:92.

[108] Another critical term in which an analogous semantic shift has occurred is the all-important word *wāḥid* (one), which we investigate in greater detail below (see section 5, p. 215ff).

(effect), *wujūb* (necessity), *imkān* (contingency), *qidam* (eternality), *ḥudūth* (temporal origination), and others.[109]

In addition to the use of vague and ambiguous terms, Ibn Taymiyya also notes that confusions can arise from a misconstrual of grammar. Similar to the case of lexical items, such grammar-related confusions stem from a failure to account for the actual manner in which the language is conventionally used, as distinguished from the abstract and idealized grammar projected by the mind of the professional grammarian. As an example, Ibn Taymiyya cites the manner in which many of the rationalists (*nuẓẓār*) interpret the use of certain passive participles (*ism mafʿūl*) in Arabic. He says that such thinkers often encounter a passive participle and then, by deducing directly from the morphological form (as opposed to the actual usage), claim that there must be an agent involved. For instance, they might draw the conclusion that if God is said to be "*makhṣūṣ*" ("specified" or "characterized") by the possession of particular attributes, then this must mean that He has a *mukhaṣṣiṣ* ("specifier" or "characterizer") external to Himself who conferred these attributes upon Him. Ibn Taymiyya, however, argues that in the actual conventional use of the Arabic language, certain passive participles have come to be used in a purely intransitive sense, meaning (in the case of the word *makhṣūṣ*, for instance) only that the thing is qualified by a certain characteristic or attribute, not that the attribute in question has been conferred upon it by an external agent (as suggested by the passive participle form when considered in the abstract). In actual usage, then, the passive participle *makhṣūṣ* is equivalent in meaning to the active participle *mukhtaṣṣ*, derived from the verb *ikhtaṣṣa*. This verb, derived from the same root as *makhṣūṣ*, normally conveys the intransitive/mediopassive sense of "to be specified or characterized by," meaning simply "having or possessing the characteristic of" with no implication that the characteristic in question has been conferred upon its bearer by an external agent.[110]

Ibn Taymiyya contends that many of the terms used by the rationalists fall into the same category as the word *makhṣūṣ*. That is, while such terms may be, formally speaking, past participles of transitive verbs, they are nonetheless used in a strictly intransitive or mediopassive sense. Technical terms that fall into this category include the all-important words *mawjūd* (existent, existing), *makhṣūṣ* (specified or characterized [by]), *muʾallaf* (made up [of], constituted

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[109] *Darʾ*, 1:222, lines 11–15.

[110] Note that Form VIII (*iftaʿala*) of this particular verb ("*ikhtaṣṣa*") carries the transitive meaning of Form I as well, as evidenced in a verse such as "*wa-Llāhu yakhtaṣṣu bi-raḥmatihi man yashāʾ*" (And God singles out for His mercy whom He will) (Q. *al-Baqara* 2:105).

[by]), *murakkab* (composite), and *muḥaqqaq* (realized; real, actual). As a question of conventional usage, such terms do not necessarily mean (and, when applied to God, definitely do not mean) that an external agent has conferred the given quality on the entity characterized by it. However, many people misinterpret these and similar terms by construing them strictly on the formal basis of their morphological pattern while disregarding their meaning as determined by their actual usage in the known convention of Arabic speakers. The problem, for Ibn Taymiyya, is that such people have interpreted the morphological form of the word too "literally," mistakenly prioritizing abstract linguistic forms, and the formal generalizations made about them, over the more relevant criterion of their actual use in the known linguistic convention of the relevant speech community.[111] Ibn Taymiyya considers this yet another example of the rationalists forcing language into their own intellectual mold and grafting the conclusions of their rational speculations onto the pre-existing linguistic convention. Ibn Taymiyya, once again, maintains that due consideration of established linguistic norms is likely to clear up the issue under investigation and, typically, to undercut the doctrines and assumptions that have come to be attached to it through the speculations of the rationalists (*nuẓẓār*).

5 A Case Study: The Terms *wāḥid, tawḥīd,* and *tarkīb*

Ibn Taymiyya discusses at length the specific example of the all-important words *wāḥid* (one) and *tawḥīd* (oneness of God), as well as the related notion of *tarkīb* (composition). As we saw in chapter 1, the early Muʿtazila, influenced by the Aristotelian distinction between essence and attributes, understood oneness—particularly that of God—in much the same way as Aristotle did, that is, as perfect simplicity. According to this technical philosophical usage (*iṣṭilāḥ*), that which is truly "one" is that whose essence is completely simple (*basīṭ*) and entirely undifferentiated (*lā yuʿlamu minhu shayʾ dūna shayʾ*) and, as a consequence, is necessarily devoid of any attributes distinct from essence. On this view, if God were to possess attributes, He would no longer be truly "one" (in the sense of being perfectly simple and undifferentiated); rather, He would be "composite" (*murakkab*), that is, "composed" of His essence and His attributes. On this understanding, then, the affirmation of divine attributes—even those that seem to be affirmed unambiguously in revelation—would lead to a contradiction with the even more fundamental principle, also affirmed emphatically by revelation, that God is, first and foremost, one (*wāḥid*). Based on the premise that affirming the divine attributes would compromise God's oneness, the philosophers and the Muʿtazila presume that if revelation is to be deemed consistent (with itself and with reason), it cannot be held to affirm both God's oneness and His possession of myriad attributes, since oneness and the possession of attributes are mutually exclusive and therefore contradictory. On the basis of philosophical principles requiring that God be one, in addition to the Qurʾān's own emphatic insistence that God is one, the philosophers and the Muʿtazila maintain that the internal and rational consistency of revelation can be maintained only if God's alleged attributes are interpreted as metaphorical rather than real, that is, as mere names (*asmāʾ*) that do not correspond to any actual extant qualities (*ṣifāt*) by which the divine essence (*dhāt*) may be said to be qualified. From another angle, they argue that anything that possesses attributes is necessarily a body (*jism*), that all bodies are divisible (*munqasim*), and that anything that is divisible cannot be said to be "one." Here, we find an example of a conclusion (namely, that an entity that is truly one cannot be qualified by attributes) that has allegedly been reached through reason but that is also asserted to concur with revelation, since revelation also uncompromisingly declares the emphatic oneness of God. This declaration of oneness is taken to be more fundamental than revelation's simultaneous apparent affirmation of divine attributes. As a result, these qualities are interpreted not as real attributes but as mere names in order to avoid the implication that revelation, by affirming attributes of a God who is "one," is both internally inconsistent and in contradiction with the dictates of reason.

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[111] Ibn Taymiyya's critique of granting automatic precedence to formal grammatical and morphological patterns over actual language use, given that such use does not always conform mechanically to the strictures of an idealized system, was advanced in a much more strident and comprehensive form by the iconoclastic Ẓāhirī Andalusian grammarian Ibn Maḍāʾ al-Qurṭubī (d. 592/1196), who, in his relatively short (seventy-page) *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-nuḥāh*, written towards the end of his life, calls for a fundamental overhaul of what he considered the abstruseness, artificiality, and needless complication of the existing linguistic sciences. In a spirit reminiscent of Ibn Taymiyya's attack on the theoretical constructs of many of the theologians, Ibn Maḍāʾ took fellow grammarians to task for their preoccupation with abstract notions like grammatical governance (*ʿamal*) and analogy (*qiyās*), which needlessly complicated grammar and often had little bearing on the actual functioning of the language or its correct use. For a summary presentation, see Versteegh, *Arabic Linguistic Tradition*, 140–152. For more detailed treatments, see Nakamura, "Ibn Maḍāʾs Criticism of Arabic Grammarians," esp. 98–111; Versteegh, "Ibn Maḍāʾ as a Ẓāhirī Grammarian," esp. 216–228; and Suleiman, *Arabic Grammatical Tradition*, 145–177.

The question of the rational coherence, let alone the necessity, of the view that something that is truly one must be perfectly simple—and, therefore, devoid of attributes so as not to be "composite"—is taken up at length in the next chapter, in which we examine Ibn Taymiyya's rational critique of the philosophers' ontology and epistemology. Here, we explore the linguistic side of Ibn Taymiyya's endeavor, in which he is concerned to determine whether, from a purely linguistic point of view, it is plausible to identify revelation's insistent affirmation of God's oneness with the philosophers' and the Muʿtazila's notion of oneness as pure simplicity devoid of any positive attributes (such as those predicated of God in revelation). Presumably, a Muʿtazilī would argue for the validity of this identification on the basis that if reason has discovered that "one" means "simple" and if God and His revelation are rationally coherent and not absurd or nonsensical, then Qurʾānic statements to the effect that God is one *must* be meant as a declaration of His perfect simplicity and His concomitant lack of real attributes. Ibn Taymiyya, by contrast, maintains that revelation can reasonably be interpreted to mean only what the Prophet and his Companions can plausibly be held to have understood from its wording, as received and comprehended in the context of their own linguistic milieu and thought world. For Ibn Taymiyya, then, the first question—prior to any rational investigation or critique of the philosophers' notion of oneness—is to identify what the word "one" meant in the linguistic convention (*ʿurf*) of the Prophet and his Companions and, therefore, what the assertion of God's oneness in the Qurʾān must have meant to them, as a function both of their existing linguistic convention and of the theology and overall worldview of the Qurʾān as it impinged upon and modified that convention.

Starting with the linguistic meaning of "one" (*wāḥid*), Ibn Taymiyya asserts that this word in the Arabic language (and in all languages, he avers[112]), as determined by its actual use among the language's speakers, is only found to apply to that which, in the terminology of the philosophers and the Muʿtazila, is considered "divisible" and a "body"—in other words, to an entity qualified by particular attributes. He remarks that Arabic speakers speak of "one man" (as opposed to two men or three men), where the one man in question is a bodily entity with various attributes, is divisible (that is, his limbs can be severed and separated from him), and so forth. The Arabic word "one" in "one man," therefore, simply signifies a lack of plurality of entities (in this case, men), not the lack of qualities or attributes proper to and inseparable from the (one) entity itself. To be “one” in the conventional use of the Arabic language thus simply means to be a single instantiated particular entity (rather than a plurality of entities), one that is necessarily and inescapably qualified by whatever range of attributes are inherent to the species or class to which the entity in question belongs. Ibn Taymiyya also calls to witness a number of Qurʾānic verses in which the word “one” is used to refer to a single, whole entity invariably qualified by attributes of some sort or another.[113] In no circumstance, he argues, is the term “one” in Arabic found to have been used by its speakers in the idiosyncratic and highly restricted technical sense of the philosophers and the Muʿtazila. In fact, such a usage would have been quite impossible since the distinction between essence and attributes that it presupposes was unknown to the Arabs and formed no part of their intellectual framework.[114] And yet, God spoke to the Arabs in their language, in terms that they could only have understood as a function of their native frame of reference.

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[112] Despite his strong "empiricism" and the importance he gives to the specific contextualized use of a particular language (in this case Arabic), Ibn Taymiyya nevertheless hints at the existence of universally shared notions and conceptions that are the same for all individuals in all cultures, irrespective of the specific languages in which they are expressed. In fact, in another place in the *Darʾ*, he speaks specifically of "the meaning that does not change according to the difference in languages" (*al-maʿnā alladhī lā yakhtalifu bi-ikhtilāf al-lughāt*). *Darʾ*, 5:325, line 18.

Beyond this, Ibn Taymiyya contends that what the philosophers refer to as “one” in their technical discourse—namely, a perfectly simple essence unqualified by any attributes whatsoever—is a notion of which most people have no conception[115] and of whose existence they have neither theoretical knowledge (*ʿilm*) nor practical experience (*khibra*) such that their conventional language should contain a word to express it. It goes without saying, he maintains, that a term that is widely shared (*mashhūr*) among people and used by both the general population (*al-ʿāmma*) and the specialists of a particular discipline (*al-khāṣṣa*) cannot legitimately be construed to carry a meaning only conceived by and known among the specialist few.[116] In other words, since language is shared by all members of the speech community equally, it must be assumed to presuppose the conceptions (*taṣawwurāt*) that are common to all and not those of a philosophical elite or any other group of specialists. (This is particularly true of the language of revelation since revelation is explicitly addressed to all people equally.) Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya contends, people know by the light of their natural, inborn faculty of reasoning that the entity the philosophers call “one” (namely, an entity devoid of any attributes whatsoever) could only be conceived of theoretically in the mind but could not exist as such in external reality.[117] And even if, for the sake of argument, one allowed for the existence or the possibility of the existence of such an entity in external reality, one would still have to substantiate that such an entity is properly designated by the term "one" (*wāḥid*) in the known linguistic convention of the seventh-century Arabs to whom the oneness of God in the Qurʾān was initially proclaimed. Since, however, the word *wāḥid* in actual Arabic usage is known to connote nothing of the specialized technical meaning of "one" as used by the philosophers and Muʿtazilī theologians, one cannot legitimately appeal to such verses as Q. *al-Baqara* 2:163: "And your God is one God" (*wa-ilāhukum ilāhun wāḥid*) or Q. *al-Ikhlāṣ* 112:1: "Say, 'He is God, [who is] One'" (*qul huwa Llāhu aḥad*) as textual support for the denial of the divine attributes. Ibn Taymiyya concludes that projecting the later technical, philosophical meaning of the word "one" onto terms like *wāḥid* or *aḥad* as they are used in revelation constitutes not only a falsification of (*firya ʿalā*) the revealed texts and reason but also a distortion and disruption of the manner in which language itself functions as a tool for the communication of meaning among its speakers on the basis of a necessarily transparent and commonly shared linguistic habitus.[118] Indeed, as the Qurʾān itself informs us, "Never did We send a messenger except [that he spoke] in the *language of his people*, that he might explain to them clearly."[119]

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[113] These verses are Q. *al-Baqara* 2:266; *al-Nisāʾ* 4:11; *al-Tawba* 9:6; *Yūsuf* 12:36, 12:41; *al-Kahf* 18:22, 18:26, 18:32, 18:49, 18:110; *al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:26, 28:27; *al-Jinn* 72:18, 72:22; *al-Muddaththir* 74:11; and *al-Ikhlāṣ* 112:4. (*Darʾ*, 7:115–116).

[114] For an exhaustive treatment of Ibn Taymiyya’s critique of the philosophers’ theory of essences, see Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, esp. at xiv–xxvii.

[115] “*laysa huwa shayʾan yaʿqiluhu al-nās.*” *Darʾ*, 7:116, line 14 (and lines 12–15 for general point).

[116] “*al-lafẓ al-mashhūr bayna al-khāṣṣ wa-l-ʿāmm lā yakūnu musammāhu mimmā lā yataṣawwaruhu illā al-khāṣṣa.*” *Darʾ*, 7:120, lines 17–18. Also *Darʾ*, 7:118, lines 8–9 and similar at 7:120, lines 3–6.

Such, then, is the case of the usage of the term "one" in the common speech of the Arabs to whom the Qurʾān was initially revealed. But what of the particular use, if any, of the word "one" as employed by revelation specifically in relation to God? The oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) affirmed in the Qurʾān, Ibn Taymiyya explains, entails not simply the affirmation that God is numerically singular (that is, that there is only one God and no others) but, more specifically, the affirmation of the exclusive divinity (*ilāhiyya*) of God and God alone, in other words, that there is no other god (*ilāh*) rightfully deserving of worship save the one true God. To put it differently, the point of the Qurʾān's insistence on *tawḥīd* is to assert not merely that God is *one* but that He is one *God*. Ibn Taymiyya cites a *ḥadīth* and a number of Qurʾānic verses to support this conception of what it means to declare that God is one.[120] This understanding stands in contrast to the definition that many *mutakallimūn* give of the word *tawḥīd* when they define it as consisting (merely) of God's oneness in His essence, whereby He has no part (*juzʾ*) or counterpart (*qasīm*); His oneness in His attributes, wherein He has no like (*shabīh*); and His oneness in His actions, in which He has no partner or co-sharer (*sharīk*). Yet this tripartite division of *tawḥīd* into oneness of essence, of attributes, and of acts only partly overlaps with the *tawḥīd* affirmed by revelation, which includes, as we have seen, the explicit affirmation, in word and in deed, of God's singular *divinity* (*ulūhiyya*) and His unique right to be worshipped.[121] In this manner, Ibn Taymiyya concludes, the later *mutakallimūn* fail to include in the nominatum (*musammā*) of the word *tawḥīd* this aspect of divinity and rightful worship that is essential to it while smuggling into it a range of other meanings (based on the private and idiosyncratic technical usage of the philosophers) that entail a contradiction of the plain sense of revelation through a negation of the divine attributes unambiguously affirmed therein.

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[117] "*bal ʿuqūl al-nās wa-fiṭaruhum majbūla ʿalā inkārihi wa-nafyihi.*" *Darʾ*, 7:116, line 15.

[118] *Darʾ*, 7:120, lines 7–8.

[119] "*wa-mā arsalnā min rasūlin illā bi-lisāni qawmihi li-yubayyina lahum*" (Q. *Ibrāhīm* 14:4).

[120] These verses are Q. *al-Baqara* 2:163; *al-Naḥl* 16:36, 16:51; *al-Isrāʾ* 17:46; *al-Muʾminūn* 23:117; *al-Ṣāffāt* 37:35–36; *Ṣād* 38:5; *al-Zumar* 39:45; *al-Zukhruf* 43:45; and *al-Mumtaḥana* 60:4. (*Darʾ*, 1:224–225).

We have seen in the preceding two paragraphs that the Qurʾān uses the terms *wāḥid* and *tawḥīd*, with respect to God, both in terms of a common everyday meaning (namely, that there is only one entity who is God and not several) and in terms of a novel meaning introduced by revelation (namely, that this numerically singular God is alone deserving of worship). A problem arises, however, when a word is used in a technical sense by a particular group and infused with meanings not originally part of the semantic field assigned to it by its original users. As we have seen above, Ibn Taymiyya concedes that when the philosophers and Muʿtazila affirm that God has "no parts, no counterpart, and no like," this is a true statement that indeed conveys a (rationally and scripturally) valid meaning, namely, the impossibility that God should separate into parts (*yatafarraq*), degenerate (*yafsud*), or disintegrate (*yastaḥīl*). This is so because God is both "*aḥad*" (singularly and emphatically one) and "*ṣamad*" (which means, for physical objects, that which is solid and has no hollow center, but which also carries the abstract meaning of a "master or lord whose sovereignty and power are complete and perfect"[122]). Yet the philosophers and the Muʿtazila superimpose upon this correct meaning a negation of God's being above His creation (*ʿuluwwuhu ʿalā khalqihi*) and His being distinct and separate from it (*mubāyana*). And they deny other such attributes on the grounds that affirming them would entail that God is composite (*murakkab*) and therefore divisible (*munqasim*), rendering Him in this manner "like" (*mithl*) or "similar to" (*shabīh bi*) created things. In response, Ibn Taymiyya insists that those knowledgeable of the Arabic language and the context of revelation know that such meanings are simply *not* signified by the terms "composition" (*tarkīb*), "divisibility"

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[121] On this theme, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 26–29 ("The Centrality of Worshipping God Alone") and Hoover, 120–122 ("Lordship and Divinity"). See also Hoover, "Hanbali Theology," 634–635. For Ibn Taymiyya's theology more generally, see "Tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya" (vol. 1 of *MF*) and "Tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya" (vol. 2 of *MF*).

[122] "*al-sayyid alladhī kamula suʾdaduhu*." *Darʾ*, 1:228, line 6.

(*inqisām*), or "likeness"/"similarity" (*tamthīl*/*tashbīh*) in the commonly understood Arabic language in which the Qurʾān was revealed.

As for the precarious term *tarkīb* (composition), Ibn Taymiyya cites several common everyday meanings of this word, including (1) that which has been put together or assembled by something else (*mā rakkabahu ghayruhu*), (2) that which was disaggregated and subsequently came together (*mā kāna muftariqan fa-ijtamaʿa*), and (3) that which can be dissevered or taken apart (*mā yumkinu tafrīq baʿḍihi ʿan baʿḍ*),[123] such as a man, an animal, or a plant.[124] Now, it is doubtless true, according to Ibn Taymiyya, that God is not composite in any of these commonly understood senses. The philosophers (and particularly Ibn Sīnā), however, have adopted the word "composition" (*tarkīb*) as a technical term and endowed it with a number of meanings additional to its original connotations, among which is the notion that God must be devoid of all attributes so as not to be "composed" of His essence (*dhāt*) and His would-be attributes (*ṣifāt*).[125] This conclusion is based on the premise that "every composite entity (*kullu murakkab*) is dependent on (*muftaqir ilā*) its parts (*ajzāʾihi*)" or, alternatively, dependent on "other than itself" (*ghayrihi*)—on the assumption that a thing's constituent parts are "other than" the thing itself taken as a composite whole.[126] On this understanding, God's would-be attributes are taken to be "parts" (*ajzāʾ*) that are "other than" (*ghayr*) God Himself and upon which He would be "dependent" (*muftaqir*) if He were indeed to possess such attributes. Thus, not only would the possession of attributes make God "composite" and therefore not "one" (in the specialized philosophical sense of perfectly simple), but His alleged "dependence" on "other than" Himself would negate His perfection and divine self-sufficiency as well.

In this manner, Ibn Taymiyya remarks, the philosophers have negated God's ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*) and attributes (*ṣifāt*) in the belief that, by doing so, they were preserving the oneness (*tawḥīd*) of His essence (*dhāt*).[127] Yet in reality, Ibn Taymiyya insists, the distinction between essence and attributes is a purely mental one since the various attributes of a given entity can only be separated by the mind for the purpose of rational analysis but can never exist as such—that is, separate from essence—in the outside world.[128] In external reality, there can exist only the thing's essence as qualified by the various attributes and properties concomitant to it.[129] In short, according to Ibn Taymiyya, while the mind may make a *logical* distinction between essence and attributes, the *ontological* reality of any existent entity necessarily comprises both its essence and its concomitant attributes as one (ontologically) inseparable and indivisible whole. On this analysis, then, the philosophical maxim that "every composite entity is dependent on what is other than it since it is dependent on its part(s)"[130] can, once the rational meanings have been stripped from the technical jargon of the philosophers, be translated as "any entity qualified by a necessary attribute concomitant to it can only exist along with its necessary attribute."[131] And this meaning, Ibn Taymiyya asserts, is true (in fact, it is tautological) and conforms both with a sound rational analysis of the issue and with the numerous scriptural dicta that unambiguously affirm specific attributes of God—quite in spite of the fact that the philosophers have chosen to refer to the inseparable attributes of an entity as "parts of" or as "other than" the entity itself, or to describe the ontological concomitance (*istilzām*, *talāzum*) between the entity's essence and its attributes as the "dependence" (*iftiqār*) of the former upon the latter, or to refer to an entity's being qualified by necessary attributes concomitant to it as a form of "composition" (*tarkīb*). Ibn Taymiyya's point is that if these are the specialized, technical meanings the philosophers have given to the common terms "part," "other," "dependence," and "composition," then there is no rational or scriptural reason to deny the statement that God is "composed" (of His essence and attributes) and therefore "dependent" on "parts" that are "other than" He *on this interpretation* of the terms—quite apart from the fact that such idiosyncratic meanings fly in the face of what these words mean in the widely shared convention of Arabic speakers[132] and are therefore likely to be misleading and to give rise to numerous confusions and errors on the level of both rational analysis and scriptural interpretation.

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[123] In another place, Ibn Taymiyya uses the words "that whose parts can be separated" (*mā yaqbalu tafrīq ajzāʾihi*). *Darʾ*, 3:16, lines 3–4.

[124] *Darʾ*, 1:280, lines 14–18. Also *Darʾ*, 3:16, lines 3–4.

[125] For a list of the five technical usages that the philosophers added to the original nominatum (*musammā*) of the word *tarkīb*, see *Darʾ*, 3:389, line 5 to 3:390, line 3. Also *Darʾ*, 5:142, lines 1–9.

[126] *Darʾ*, 3:16, lines 1–2.

[127] *Darʾ*, 5:141, lines 17–18.

[128] And it is only in this notional sense that one may legitimately describe an attribute as

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being "other than" the entity as a whole or, indeed, "other than"—in the sense of distinct from—any of the entity's other discrete attributes. See *Darʾ*, 1:281, lines 6–17.

[129] "*laysat lahu ḥaqīqa ghayr al-dhāt al-mawṣūfa* [*bi-ṣifātihā al-lāzima lahā*]." *Darʾ*, 1:281, line 7 and *Darʾ*, 3:16–17, *passim*.

[130] "*kullu murakkab muftaqir ilā ghayrihi li-iftiqārihi ilā juzʾihi*." *Darʾ*, 3:12, lines 10–11. For Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of the word *ghayr*, see *Darʾ*, 1:281 and 3:16–17.

[131] "*al-mawṣūf bi-ṣifa lāzima lahu lā yakūnu mawjūdan bi-dūn ṣifatihi al-lāzima lahu*." *Darʾ*, 3:16, lines 11–12.

[132] Ibn Taymiyya explicitly states that "referring to this meaning as 'composition' is a convention that they [the philosophers] have established (*waḍʿ waḍaʿūhu*) and that does not conform to the (conventional) language of the Arabs or to the language of any other community (*laysa muwāfiqan li-lughat al-ʿArab wa-lā lughat aḥad min al-umam*)." *Darʾ*, 1:281, lines 2–3.

Ultimately, a given question must be decided on the basis of a sound rational analysis and a sound scriptural exegesis once the terms of the discussion have been carefully analyzed and their various meanings separated, fully clarified, and individually judged for their scriptural, as well as their rational, integrity.

We have seen above the example of a term used in revelation, *wāḥid*, and a closely related term not used in revelation, *tarkīb*, both of which underwent a significant semantic shift by being infused with unprecedented meanings reflecting a novel conceptual framework alien to the intellectual and linguistic habits of the early Muslims.[133] This novel conceptual and linguistic schema was then read back into revelation by later philosophers and theologians such that the uncontroversial statement "God is one and incomposite"—understood in accord with the original convention as carrying the (scripturally affirmed and rationally coherent) meaning that there exists only one single entity who is God and who alone deserves to be worshipped and who neither was assembled nor is subject to disaggregation—was now taken to carry the (scripturally indefensible and rationally incoherent) meaning that God, who is perfectly simple, is absolute or unconditioned being (*wujūd muṭlaq*) possessing no attributes whatsoever. That such a notion of "God" is radically at odds with the plain sense of scripture (understood according to the linguistic convention of its original recipients) is beyond question for Ibn Taymiyya since, at the time of revelation, the words *wāḥid* (one), *murakkab* (composite), and related terms carried none of the highly specialized meanings invested in them by later philosophers attempting to express the assumptions and entailments of a foreign *Weltanschauung* in the Arabic language.[134] But Ibn Taymiyya goes beyond asserting the mere scriptural incompatibility of such a notion of God, arguing that it is rationally indefensible as well since "unconditioned being" and "unconditioned essence" not qualified by any attributes whatsoever are, he insists, purely logical constructs that can exist only in the mind.[135] The crucial lesson to be drawn here, for Ibn Taymiyya, is that a statement such as "God is one and incomposite" cannot be responsibly affirmed or negated categorically until all its constituent terms have been carefully dissected, whereupon one should then proceed to affirm and deny the individual *meanings* thus identified irrespective of the terms used to express them, for “rational inquiry is concerned with meanings (*maʿānī*), not [the] mere technical terms (*iṣṭilāḥāt*)[by which they are expressed].”[136]

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[133] Indeed, the reader will note that, for Ibn Taymiyya, the all-important Qurʾānic term *taʾwīl* has itself suffered a similar fate, as detailed above in section 1, pp. 184–185.

[134] See von Weizsäcker, "Über Sprachrelativismus" for an insightful treatment of the manner in which the modes of thought in the major world cultures (including the Islamic and the European) are, to a considerable extent, bound to and determined by the specificities of those cultures' regnant languages—what the author refers to as the "Sprachbezogenheit der Denksysteme der großen Kulturen" (the language-boundedness of the thought systems of the major cultures).

[135] This topic is taken up in greater detail in the following chapter.

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We began this chapter with a Qurʾānic verse that states, “Never did We send a messenger except [that he spoke] in the language of his people, that he might explain to them clearly (*li-yubayyina lahum*).”[137] In a sense, this chapter—and indeed Ibn Taymiyya’s entire linguistic philosophy and hermeneutical approach—can be seen as a commentary on and an elaboration of this and similar verses. The fundamental fact of revelation is that it consists of a communiqué from God on high to His human creatures here on earth. The message is vital, the communication essential, and the stakes for human welfare in this world and the next exceedingly high. If men are to be imparted the truth about themselves and their Creator and are to be held morally accountable for this truth in an eternal hereafter, then certainly, Ibn Taymiyya reasons, God would not fail to communicate to them with utmost clarity and determinacy the content of those beliefs and actions for which they will be held eternally responsible. I pair the terms “clarity” and “determinacy” here deliberately, for Ibn Taymiyya takes it as axiomatic that there is a strong correlation—or, as he might say, a “*talāzum*,” or mutual implication—between clarity, on the one hand, and a determinacy approaching univocity (particularly in broad theological matters), on the other. For Ibn Taymiyya, effective communication is that which leaves the recipient with no doubt regarding the content of the missive and the intentions of the dispatcher. A highly indeterminate text open to a multitude of contradictory readings[138] would represent, for Ibn Taymiyya, a consummate failure in effective communication, as it would leave each reader to foist his own subjective opinions onto an essentially meaningless concatenation of ambivalent vocables. A text that can mean anything means, in fact, nothing.

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[136] “*wa-l-naẓar al-ʿaqlī innamā yakūnu fī al-maʿānī lā fī mujarrad al-iṣṭilāḥāt.*” *Darʾ*, 10:239, line 17. See similar at *Darʾ*, 1:282, lines 15–16; 1:296, lines 8–10; 1:299, lines 1–5; 3:237, lines 15–16; and 9:291, line 17.

[137] Q. *Ibrāhīm* 14:4.

[138] I say specifically “contradictory readings” since Ibn Taymiyya does allow that the words and verses of revelation can, to a limited degree, legitimately carry several meanings, but these, he insists, are always complementary—highlighting various aspects of one and the same reality—rather than contradictory. For a more detailed analysis, see Saleh, “Radical Hermeneutics,” 131–136.

Working from the premise that revelation is preeminently clear and intelligible, Ibn Taymiyya elaborates a thoroughly language-based hermeneutic that views the collective repository of revealed texts as fully independent and self-sufficient in their conveyance of a unified, coherent, and comprehensible worldview and theology. The transparency and self-sufficiency of the texts relieve the exegete of any need to rely on extra-textual sources in order to comprehend revelation, particularly the notoriously contentious and parochial "rational conclusions" (*ʿaqliyyāt*) of the divers schools of philosophy and speculative theology. Ibn Taymiyya's interpretive method, as we have seen, builds on a larger linguistic epistemology that posits that the meaning of any linguistic utterance is solely determinable through a careful consideration of context, judged against the backdrop of the known linguistic conventions of the speech community to which the language is directed. Context and convention work together to isolate, usually in a definitive manner, which of the various meanings signified by a given word is meant in any given instance. Ibn Taymiyya's insistence on the inherent and hence inescapable contextuality of all linguistic utterances (revelation or otherwise) renders redundant the traditional distinction between putatively "literal" (*ḥaqīqa*) and "figurative" (*majāz*) meanings presupposed by the kind of "third-wave" *taʾwīl* beloved of the philosophers and theologians but that Ibn Taymiyya insists was vehemently rejected by the Salaf. If the apparent sense (*ẓāhir*) of any utterance is determined strictly as a function of context, then there can never be any need to deflect a word from its supposed primary meaning to a would-be secondary, "non-literal" one. Given the central importance Ibn Taymiyya accords to context, I have qualified his hermeneutics as a kind of "contextual *taʾwīl*," an appellation he would no doubt accept insofar as "*taʾwīl*" here is taken strictly in its original sense of "*tafsīr al-maʿnā*," or the explication of the straightforward lexical meaning of an utterance-in-context.

Yet if we are to judge what a particular word must mean in a given context, we can only do so if we are thoroughly familiar with the wider linguistic conventions of our speech community, which dictate that a given word conventionally carries such-and-such a meaning when used in such-and-such a context. Absent this experiential familiarity with the discrete conventions of a defined linguistic community, we would have no basis on which to pass an accurate judgement on the contextualized meaning of an utterance. Given that the Qurʾān was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions in the seventh-century classical Arabic familiar to them, it is, naturally, their linguistic convention (and related conceptual framework) that must be considered the final determinant of what revelation meant to them. And what revelation meant to *them* is, for Ibn Taymiyya, what revelation means, period. To entertain the possibility that revelation could have a "real" meaning at odds with the understanding of the Salaf—only to be uncovered generations later via the idiosyncratic conventions of a foreign society whose vocabulary, assumptions, and intellectual habits are other than those presupposed by the Qurʾān—would not only amount to a fatal belying of the Qurʾān's own self-proclaimed clarity but also entail the categorical negation of the very essence of language and the design and function of linguistic communication, be it divine or otherwise.[139]

As the investigation we have conducted in this chapter makes clear, Ibn Taymiyya seeks to effect a shift away from a hermeneutic that prioritizes abstract speculation (and that endeavors to fit revelation into the mold of a preset worldview allegedly derived on the basis of pure reason) towards a hermeneutic that is thoroughly grounded in language and in which the revealed texts are fully self-sufficient in their conveyance of theological and other truths to mankind. In the next chapter, we turn our attention to how Ibn Taymiyya deconstructs the basic assumptions of philosophy in order to reestablish the connection—and the harmony—between authentic revelation (*naql ṣaḥīḥ*) and his reconstructed notion of pure reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*).

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139 Once again, this should not be taken to mean that Ibn Taymiyya necessarily rejects the prerogative of later generations to entertain their own personal or collective insights regarding the revealed texts, provided these insights are complementary to, and never in contradiction with, the meanings we can determine to have been understood by the Salaf.

CHAPTER 5

Ṣarīḥ al-Maʿqūl, or What Is Reason?

> Every time a man comes to us more disputatious than another, shall we abandon what Gabriel has brought to Muḥammad (peace be upon him) on account of such man's controversy?
>
> MĀLIK B. ANAS[1]

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For Ibn Taymiyya, the question of the alleged conflict between reason and revelation in medieval Islam, as we have seen, boils down most crucially to a question of how to understand the revealed texts that concern the divine attributes. In the last chapter, we explored Ibn Taymiyya's approach to language and textual interpretation in order to uncover his methodology for determining precisely what it is that revelation says. Here, we explore the main elements of Ibn Taymiyya's ontology and epistemology, both of which are central in his bid to demonstrate that it is possible to maintain a plain-sense understanding of scripture—in accord with what he claims to be the universal practice of the Salaf—without running the risk of rational contradictions or falling into assimilationism (*tashbīh*) of the type that would compromise God's majesty, uniqueness, and utter dissimilarity to all created things. In the current chapter, we examine Ibn Taymiyya's principal ontological and epistemological views. In the final chapter, we then present and evaluate his use of the various tools he has developed to resolve, once and for all, the centuries-long conflict between reason and revelation that constitutes the subject of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*.

In a relatively brief passage in volume 7 of the *Darʾ*,[2] Ibn Taymiyya outlines, in an uncharacteristically explicit and theoretical fashion, the main components of a comprehensive epistemological system in which he identifies three fundamental sources of knowledge: (1) sensation (*ḥiss*), which comprises both an outer (*ẓāhir*) and an inner (*bāṭin*) dimension; (2) reason (*ʿaql*), specifically the processes of discursive reasoning and rational inference (*al-iʿtibār*

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[1] "*a-wa-kullamā jāʾanā rajul ajdal min rajul taraknā mā jāʾa bihi Jibrīl ilā Muḥammad* (*ṣallā Allāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam*) *li-jadal hādhā?*" Cited at *Darʾ*, 1:191, lines 2–3.

[2] *Darʾ*, 7:324, lines 8–17.

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bi-l-naẓar wa-l-qiyās) through which the particular knowledge provided by the senses is universalized; and (3) transmitted reports (*khabar*),[3] which include but are not limited to the texts of revelation. In the following pages, I unpack this passage by providing a detailed description of each individual source of knowledge as it is presented in the *Darʾ*, along with the various principles underlying its proper function and use. I then examine the twin principles that Ibn Taymiyya posits as underlying and grounding these various sources of knowledge, namely, the notion of the original normative disposition, or *fiṭra*, and a substantially expanded application of the mechanism of recurrent mass transmission, or *tawātur*.

Before delving into Ibn Taymiyya's views on reason and the acquisition of knowledge (that is, his epistemology), we must first explore his understanding of ontology. Ontology and epistemology lend themselves to a joint treatment since knowledge (a question of epistemology) is, for Ibn Taymiyya, first and foremost a question of knowing what exists (a question of ontology)—specifically, knowing what entities or kinds of entities enjoy substantive, extra-mental existence in the external world (*fī al-khārij*).[4] Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the ontology espoused by the philosophers and, he charges, many of the *mutakallimūn* is central to his project in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* and other works[5] and must, therefore, be adequately accounted for if we are fully to appreciate his attempted deconstruction and reconstruction of reason proper. That is, Ibn Taymiyya is concerned not only to critique the philosophers' mishandling of reason but also, more fundamentally, to question their assumptions concerning the very nature of reality itself, that reality about which they purport to be reasoning. Finally, since a major pillar of Ibn Taymiyya's project rests on his contention that the philosophers are the victims of massive confusion regarding what exists "out there" in extra-mental reality versus what exists only in the mind, we must treat considerations of ontology and epistemology in tandem if an accurate understanding of Ibn Taymiyya's fundamentally epistemological project—namely, that of resolving the alleged conflict between reason and revelation—is to be possible. Once we have probed Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of what reality consists of, we will be in a position to account for his views on the various ways in which we gain knowledge of that reality. We shall then be poised to consider, in the concluding chapter, how Ibn Taymiyya marshals the various elements of his ontological and epistemological, as well as his linguistic, reforms to dissolve certain key elements of philosophical thought that he holds to be both rationally indefensible and, at the same time, primarily responsible for the alleged contradictions between reason and revelation that he set himself the task of refuting.

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[3] The standard Arabic term used in this context is the (singular) word *khabar* (pl. *akhbār*), used generically in reference to transmitted reports as a class. It is for this reason that I render singular "*khabar*" as "reports" or "transmitted reports" (in the plural).

[4] See, for example, *Darʾ*, 6:98, line 4, where we read, "*wa-laysa al-maqṣūd al-awwal bi-l-ʿilm illā ʿilm mā huwa thābit fī al-khārij*."

[5] Most notably his *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn*, the strictly logical portions of which al-Suyūṭī (in his *Jahd al-qarīḥa*) extracted from the metaphysical discussions. (See remarks in Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, liii–lv.)

1 What Exists? Ibn Taymiyya's Account of Reality

A recurrent theme that Ibn Taymiyya stresses in many of his writings is the necessity of differentiating sharply between that which has purely mental existence (such as universal concepts and notions existing in the mind) and that which exists "out there" in external reality (*fī al-khārij*).[6] Ibn Taymiyya often denotes this distinction with an alliterative pair of terms whereby mental notions are said to exist *fī al-adhhān* (lit. "in [our] minds"), while externally existent entities are said to exist *fī al-aʿyān* (lit. "among/as [extra-mental] entities"),[7] that is, as independent, externally existent particulars.[8] The various notions that exist in the mind are said to be "*maʿqūl*" (mental, notional, logical), while that which exists in the extra-mental world is, for Ibn Taymiyya, invariably "*maḥsūs*" (perceptible, empirical). It is critical to grasp that, in Ibn Taymiyya's schema, *maʿqūl* (mental/notional) and *maḥsūs* (perceptible/empirical) are mutually exclusive and logically exhaustive categories. Thus, something exists either as a concept in the mind (like universals or abstract numbers) or as a perceptible entity in the external world (*ʿayn maḥsūs fī al-khārij*)[9]—only one or the other and never both. In Ibn Taymiyya's words, "We know of necessity that there is (in existence) only that which exists in and of itself [i.e., independently in the external world] or that which is conceptualized in the mind."[10] Below, I first present a synopsis of Ibn Taymiyya's account of what exists "out there" in the realm of extra-mental particulars (*fī al-aʿyān*) and how we can come to know it, then I explore Ibn Taymiyya's account of what subsists in the logical and conceptual world of the mind (*fī al-adhhān*).

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[6] On mental concepts inhering only in the mind and being devoid of any external existence independent of their particulars, see Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xxix.

[7] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 6:110, lines 9–10 (which is only one of many similar passages).

[8] Ibn Taymiyya also refers to this with the typical phrase "*aʿyān qāʾima bi-anfusihā*." See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 5:387, line 12, among others.

[9] On the distinction between external and mental existence—that is, between what exists *fī al-aʿyān* and what exists *fī al-adhhān*—see, e.g., *Darʾ*, 5:174, lines 11–16, where Ibn Taymiyya critiques the philosophers for positing, alongside perceptible bodies (*ajsām maḥsūsa*), the existence of "intelligible substances" (*jawāhir maʿqūla*) like matter (in the abstract) and form, externally existent universals associated with extant particulars (*al-kulliyyāt* [*fī al-khārij*] *muqārinatan lil-aʿyān*), and the Avicennian ten intellects. See also *Darʾ*, 5:135; *Radd*, 67.

1.1 *Self-Standing Entities* (Aʿyān)*: The Realms of the Seen and the Unseen*

We begin our discussion with the realm of empirical reality—the *maḥsūs*, or perceptible—the existing entities (*aʿyān*) of which are divided into two distinct sub-realms: the realm of the seen (*ʿālam al-shahāda*) and the realm of the unseen (*ʿālam al-ghayb*). The term *shahāda*, a Qurʾānic term that signifies, among other things, "that which is visible,"[11] applies collectively to the entities that are present (*shāhid*) and perceptible (*maḥsūs*) to us right now through our various external senses, such as sight, hearing, or touch. Such entities include essentially all the various objects we see, hear, taste, feel, and smell in our daily lives, as well as the various events that we witness personally. The term *ghayb*, also a Qurʾānic term,[12] applies to anything that exists as an independent particular (*ʿayn*) but is not perceptible to—or is "absent" (*ghāʾib*) from—our external senses. Now, of the entities that are perceptible to us as part of our visible (*mashhūd*) external reality, some possess an outward (*ẓāhir*) aspect as well as an inward (*bāṭin*) aspect, both of which are equally perceptible. The outward perceptible aspects of such an entity, such as the body of a human being, are perceived through the external senses (*ḥiss ẓāhir*). The inner perceptible aspects of, e.g., a human being, by contrast, include the subjective experience of internal physical conditions like hunger and satiety, as well as emotional or psychological states such as joy, anger, pain, and the like. And while a person's inner aspect is not itself empirically perceptible to others, it nevertheless remains in essence perceptible, specifically to the person himself through his own "internal sensation" (*ḥiss bāṭin*).[13] In fact, Ibn Taymiyya states explicitly that "[a person's] inner state (*bāṭin*) is not perceptible to us upon seeing his outer form *not* because it is inherently imperceptible (*lā li-ʿadam imkān iḥsāsihi*) but because his inner state is veiled (*lākin li-iḥtijāb bāṭinihi*) or on account of another quality (*aw li-maʿnā ākhar*)."[14] On the other hand, abstract relational and intentional realities, such as amity and enmity, do not count as perceptible (*maḥsūs*) for Ibn Taymiyya; rather, they are classified as "notions" (*maʿānī*) enjoying mental existence in the mind. Thus, while the desire and bloodlust that a wolf might feel upon eyeing a lone sheep are, like anger and pain, perceptible realities that the wolf experiences through internal sensation (*ḥiss bāṭin*), the sheep's perception that the wolf harbors enmity towards her or constitutes an enemy to her is, in essence, a relational judgement (*ḥukm*) and, as such, exists as a mental or notional phenomenon in the mind of the sheep. The fear, however, that is induced by the notional judgement of the wolf's enmity towards her is an internal (and hence "unseen," or *ghāʾib*) perceptible reality experienced by the sheep through her internal sensation.[15]

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[10] "*fa-innā naʿlamu bi-l-iḍṭirār annahu mā fī al-wujūd illā mā huwa mawjūd fī nafsihi aw mā huwa mutaṣawwar fī al-dhihn.*" *Darʾ*, 5:135, lines 16–17.

[11] Derivatives of the root *sh-h-d* appear in the Qurʾān 157 times, with various meanings such as "to see, to witness," "to be present," "to bear witness, testify," and "to be martyred." See Gimaret, "S̲h̲ahāda," *EI*², 9:201a. For the term *shahāda* in the sense of the visible realm in, e.g., the Qurʾānic description of God as "*ʿālim al-ghayb wa-l-shahāda*" (Knower of the unseen and the seen), see Q. *al-Anʿām* 6:73; *al-Tawba* 9:94, 9:105; *al-Raʿd* 13:9; *al-Muʾminūn* 23:92; *al-Sajda* 32:6; *al-Zumar* 39:46; *al-Ḥashr* 59:22; *al-Jumuʿa* 62:8; and *al-Taghābun* 64:18.

[12] Derivatives of the root *gh-y-b*, meaning "to be absent or hidden," appear fifty-nine times in the Qurʾān, most frequently in the sense of "what is hidden, inaccessible to the senses and to reason—thus, at the same time absent from human knowledge and hidden in divine wisdom." MacDonald and Gardet, "al-G̲h̲ayb," *EI*², 2:1025a. The plural form, "*ghuyūb*," also appears four times, specifically in the description of God as "*ʿallām al-ghuyūb*" (the One with full knowledge of unseen matters/realms/realities), at Q. *al-Māʾida* 5:109, 5:116; *al-Tawba* 9:78; and *Sabaʾ* 34:48.

Notwithstanding the fact that these inner states inhere in what are otherwise outwardly perceptible entities, the vast majority of what exists in the unseen realm (that is, the *ghayb*) consists of various self-standing entities (*aʿyān qāʾima bi-anfusihā*) and events that are, like all existing entities and events, in and of themselves perceptible, though not (normally) perceptible to us through our external senses. Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyya allows that of the various entities existing in the unseen realm, we *can* perceive, through a type of internal sensation, the existence of both our souls and God. As for all other entities and events that exist in the unseen realm—most notably angels and *jinn*, but also eschatological events such as the life of the grave, the events of the resurrection and day of judgement, and the realities of heaven and hell—we can know about them (to the extent we can know about them at all) only through what Ibn Taymiyya identifies as our second major source of knowledge after sensation, namely, transmitted reports (*khabar*), which we examine in greater detail below.

Now, the fact that entities existing in the unseen realm are not subject to our empirical verification through external sense perception does not negate their factual existence as objectively real, independent particulars. In fact, of the two realms, it is the unseen that appears to be more fundamentally real, and it is of note that in each of the ten instances in which the terms *ghayb* and *shahāda* are mentioned together in the Qurʾān,[16] the *ghayb* is invariably mentioned first. Yet we must not imagine the realm of the unseen and the realm of the seen to be separated or sealed off from each other in any categorical fashion. Of the two realms, the unseen is more comprehensive and seemingly less restricted, with the intelligent beings inhabiting it, such as the angels and *jinn*, appearing to have full access to our empirical realm (that of the *shahāda*), though the reverse does not normally hold true. The inter-relational nature of the seen and the unseen realms is further underscored by the fact that prophets, for instance, are frequently given empirical access to various domains of the unseen world, whereby they are able to perceive entities such as angels and *jinn* (not normally perceptible to human beings) and to hear what they are saying.[17] Conversely, elements of the unseen realm occasionally impinge upon our empirical (*shāhid*) realm, such as the occasion on which the angel Gabriel is reported to have appeared to the Prophet Muḥammad at the time of the first Qurʾānic revelation or the account in the well-known *ḥadīth* of Gabriel[18] where the angel Gabriel appeared in our visible, empirical realm in the form of a man who interacted with the Prophet and his Companions directly.[19]

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[13] See *Darʾ*, 6:108, lines 10–13.

[14] *Darʾ*, 6:32, line 16 to 6:33, line 2.

[15] See *Darʾ*, 6:44; also 6:52. Ibn Sīnā discusses this same example of the wolf and the sheep, where he attributes the sheep's sense of danger vis-à-vis the wolf to the estimative faculty (*wahm / al-quwwa al-wahmiyya*). For more on Ibn Sīnā's notion of *wahm*, see below, p. 273, n. 159.

Finally, there is the soul (*rūḥ*), an independent particular (*ʿayn*) that exists in the unseen realm yet is associated with the physical body for the duration of a person's worldly life. The soul is likewise able to perceive things that the body cannot perceive, similar to the manner in which a person might experience things imperceptible to other people during a state in which he is "disconnected," to a degree, from his normal bodily perceptions, as in dream.[20] Upon death, the soul becomes more definitively disconnected from the body and thus can see and sense (*tarā wa-tuḥissu bi*)[21] things that it could not see and sense while still associated with the body. If, Ibn Taymiyya urges, we realize that the soul can sense things that the body cannot and that some people can sense with both their bodies and their souls that which others cannot, then we would realize that the avenues and modalities of sensation (*ṭuruq al-ḥiss*)[22] are, in fact, numerous. Indeed, they are not limited simply to what the majority of people are able to perceive in the visible realm via their bodily senses, as such senses are normally apt to perceive only *some* of what exists in the external world. It is in this expanded sense that Ibn Taymiyya maintains the view that every self-standing entity (*kullu qāʾim bi-nafsihi*) is, in one way or another, perceptible (*yumkinu al-iḥsās bihi*), whether it exist in the realm of the empirically accessible or in that of the unseen.[23]

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[16] See p. 230, n. 11 above.

[17] *Darʾ*, 6:108, line 18 to 6:109, line 1. The Qurʾān, for instance, contains numerous passages in which prophets are depicted as having direct interaction with the *ghayb*, or unseen realm. See, e.g., Q. *al-Naml* 27:16–44 and *Ṣād* 38:36.

[18] See, e.g., Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 24–25, where this *ḥadīth* appears at the very beginning of the first "book" (Kitāb al-īmān) of the work. See also al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 23 and 1199–1200.

[19] See *Darʾ*, 6:32–33 and 6:108–109 on the definition of the *ghayb* and its relationship to the seen.

[20] With respect to the perception of the soul, Ibn Taymiyya seems to be speaking of the kind of spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) in which discrete elements of the unseen realm are disclosed to a person as a divine favor.

[21] *Darʾ*, 6:108, lines 16–17.

It emerges from the foregoing that the distinction between the seen and the unseen realms, for Ibn Taymiyya, is not an absolute ontological distinction as much as it is a relative (and, ultimately, an epistemological) one determined by the particular range and limitations of normal human sense perception. All things in existence—that is, all the self-standing entities of the seen and the unseen realms—are perceptible in their own right, only that some of them are perceptible to us in the current world (*dunyā*) through our external sensation, while others have been placed categorically beyond the reach of our senses (even when these senses are radically extended by, for example, the use of scientific instruments). From a purely ontological perspective, both realms are equally existent, equally real, equally "out there" (*fī al-khārij*), and both are equally populated by inherently perceptible, self-standing entities (*aʿyān maḥsūsa qāʾima bi-anfusihā*) that exist in their own right, distinct from and independent of other existent, self-standing entities.[24]

Beyond this ontological dimension, the notion of the "unseen" (*ghayb*) likewise comprises a temporal aspect, reflected in Ibn Taymiyya's definition of the *ghayb* as "that which is imperceptible to us *now* in the [current] world" (*ghayr*

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[22] *Darʾ*, 6:110, lines 3–4.

[23] *Darʾ*, 6:110, lines 2–8. For important discussions on what exactly Ibn Taymiyya means by his statement that all existing things are, in some sense, perceptible (*maḥsūs*), see *Darʾ*, 5:130–134, 5:168–175, and 6:32–33. See *Darʾ*, 5:173–174 for his criticism, in this regard, of the Pythagoreans, the Platonists, and the Aristotelians and *Darʾ*, 5:175 on the Peripatetics' insufficient response to the materialists.

[24] The fundamental ontological distinction, as we shall see, is between the necessary, uncreated, eternal, and indestructible existence of God, on the one hand, and the contingent, created, temporal existence of everything other than God (both seen and unseen), on the other. These qualities (necessity vs. contingency, eternity vs. temporality, etc.) are inherent to the entity in question and are therefore true in an absolute sense; that is, they are not relative to us as human beings, like the (relative) fact that some created, contingent realities happen to be perceptible to us in the current world (and are thus "*shāhid*," or present to us), while others happen not to be (and are thus "*ghāʾib*," or absent from us).

mashhūd lanā ***al-ān*** *fī al-dunyā*).[25] So, in addition to those entities that exist concurrently with us but in the unseen realm, the *ghayb* also includes, from the perspective of its temporal aspect, all events that have occurred in the visible realm in the past and those that will occur in the visible realm in the future, for although such events partake of the visible realm ontologically (that is, their occurrence takes place in the ordinary realm of time and space and in a manner analogous to the events we witness in our current empirical reality), they are nevertheless not perceptible to us right now. The use of the word *ghayb* in reference to future events in the visible realm of ordinary sense perception is evidenced in a phrase such as "*lā yaʿlamu al-ghayb illā Allāh*"[26] (lit. "God alone knows the *ghayb*"), which is functionally equivalent to English "Only God knows the future." The use of the word *ghayb* in reference to past events in the visible realm appears, for instance, in Q. *Hūd* 11:49, where, after a long passage detailing the events of the life of Noah, God addresses the Prophet Muḥammad with the words, "That is from the news of the unseen (*anbāʾ al-ghayb*) that We reveal unto you (O Muḥammad)."[27]

Finally, in addition to its ontological and temporal dimensions, the realm of the unseen is further composed of a spatial dimension, whereby even those things that exist contemporaneously with me in the visible realm but that are not immediately present to *my* sense perception right *now* are considered "*ghāʾib*" (unseen, in the unseen realm) with respect to me. Falling under this category of the unseen are essentially all places, persons, and events currently existing in the world but of which I myself do not currently have direct empirical experience through my external perception (*ḥiss ẓāhir*). When, at the end of time, the current order of existence is destroyed and a new creation (*khalq jadīd*)[28] is brought about, the distinction between the visible world of ordinary sense perception and the world of the unseen will be abrogated, the veil currently concealing the latter from the former will be lifted, and all unseen entities that are currently inaccessible to ordinary external sensation, including God,[29] will become directly perceptible—or "witnessed" (*mashhūd*)—and experienced in an immediate fashion through the external senses. At that time, Ibn Taymiyya affirms, what we used to merely *know about* with certainty we will dramatically come to witness and experience directly. In other words, what used to be merely *ʿilm al-yaqīn* (certain knowledge) will suddenly become for us *ʿayn al-yaqīn* (certainty itself).[30]

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[25] See similar at *Darʾ*, 6:107, lines 13–14 and 9:15, lines 1–4.

[26] Reminiscent of Q. *al-Naml* 27:65, which states, "Say, 'None in the heavens and the earth know the unseen save God, and they perceive not when they will be resurrected.'"

[27] See similar at Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:44 and *Yūsuf* 12:102.

[28] The expression *khalq jadīd*, in reference to the afterlife, appears eight times in the Qurʾān. See Q. *al-Raʿd* 13:5 and *al-Sajda* 32:10 (*a-innā la-fī khalqin jadīd*); *Ibrāhīm* 14:19 and *Fāṭir* 35:16 (*in yashaʾ yudhhibkum wa-yaʾti bi-khalqin jadīd*); *al-Isrāʾ* 17:49 and 17:98 (*a-innā la-mabʿūthūna khalqan jadīdan*); *Sabaʾ* 34:7 (*innakum la-fī khalqin jadīd*); and *Qāf* 50:15 (*bal hum fī labsin min khalqin jadīd*).

[29] This is a reference to the *ruʾya* ("beatific vision") alluded to in Q. *al-Qiyāma* 75:22–23: "(22) [Some] faces that day will be radiant, (23) gazing upon their Lord (*ilā rabbihā nāẓira*)."

The ontological affirmation of an unseen realm that lies beyond our current sense perception raises an important epistemological question: How can we come to know of the existence of such a realm and the realities that populate it? Indeed, how do we come to know anything at all?

2 How Do We Know What Exists? The Primary Sources of Knowledge

If I have spent so much time in the preceding section elaborating Ibn Taymiyya's account of the seen and the unseen realms, it is primarily because for him, to know is first and foremost to have knowledge of what exists "out there" as independent, self-standing entities in the external world (*aʿyān qāʾima bi-anfusihā fī al-khārij*). Only after accounting for the ontological question of what exists can we consider the epistemological question of how precisely we come to know what exists. A second reason for this elaboration, as I have already suggested, is that a great deal of Ibn Taymiyya's critique of philosophical discourse on the alleged conflict between reason and revelation can be reduced to a question of confused ontology, namely, to the charge that the philosophers have fatally confused that which has ontological existence in the external world with that which has only logical existence in the mind. The philosophers, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, claim that the *ghayb* mentioned in revelation refers to that which is *maʿqūl* (that is, intelligible, in the realm of the intellect), while the *shahāda* refers to the empirical world accessible to the external senses.[31] Ibn Taymiyya, by contrast, affirms that revelation does not, in fact, differentiate between the *ghayb* and the *shahāda* on the grounds that one (the *ghayb*) is intellectual (*maʿqūl*) in nature while the other (the *shahāda*) is empirical (*maḥsūs*), as the philosophers surmise. Rather, it differentiates between them on the grounds that the *shahāda* is visible to us now, while the *ghayb* is absent from our current empirical perception (*ghāʾib ʿannā*), though it is nonetheless fundamentally capable of being perceived (*yumkinu al-iḥsās bihi*).[32] Mental notions and categories, the stuff and contents of the mind—in other words, that which is truly *maʿqūl*—are, for Ibn Taymiyya, an entirely separate category that has nothing to do with the *ghayb* spoken of in revelation.

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[30] This distinction between *ʿilm al-yaqīn* (the knowledge of certainty) and *ʿayn al-yaqīn* (the "eye of certainty," or certainty itself) is a direct reference to Q. *al-Takāthur* 102:5–7: "(5) Nay! If only you knew with the knowledge of certainty (*kallā law taʿlamūna ʿilm al-yaqīn*)! (6) You will surely see the hellfire; (7) then will you surely see it with the eye of certainty (*thumma la-tarawunnahā ʿayn al-yaqīn*)."

[31] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 6:33, esp. lines 14–16; also *Darʾ*, 6:107, lines 15–16 and 9:15, lines 1–3.

2.1 *The First Source of Knowledge: Sensation* (ḥiss)

Ibn Taymiyya has often been referred to as an empiricist (or otherwise associated with empiricism),[33] and indeed he identifies the primary and most fundamental source of human knowledge as sensation (*ḥiss*). As we have seen, sensation has both an external (*ẓāhir*) and an internal (*bāṭin*) dimension.[34] It is through external sensation—primarily by way of our physical senses—that we come to know the objects of the empirical world around us, that world which we have identified as the visible realm, or *ʿālam al-shahāda*. Through internal sensation, by contrast, we experience various subjective emotional and psychic states and also perceive the existence of both God and our own souls. Our souls, in turn, may perceive through internal sensation certain unseen (*ghāʾib*) realities that are currently veiled to our external senses. Other than God, our souls, and what our souls may perceive in this manner, we have no access to anything else in the unseen realm through our internal sensation (nor, by definition, can we access it through our external perception). Anything else in the unseen realm that we can know about can only be known through a second, critical source of knowledge, namely, transmitted reports, or *khabar*.

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[32] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 9:14–15 (esp. 9:14, lines 17–18 and 9:15, lines 3–4).

[33] See, e.g., Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xxxi, xxxiii–xxxiv, xlvii–l; Heer, "Ibn Taymiyah's Empiricism," 113 and *passim*; von Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 296; Marcotte, "Ibn Taymiyya et sa critique," 50. See also von Kügelgen's useful summary of scholarly views on Ibn Taymiyya's "empiricism," followed by her own pertinent comments and analysis, in "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik," 214–221. As von Kügelgen argues, the similarity between Ibn Taymiyya and the later empiricists only goes so far. She further remarks (pp. 217–218) that Ibn Taymiyya does not, in fact, criticize the Aristotelian search for the essence of things itself; rather, he criticizes the presumption that this essence can be abstracted from particulars with any kind of certainty.

[34] In addition to external and internal perception, Ibn Taymiyya also counts the content of recurrently mass transmitted reports (*mutawātirāt*), matters known through observation or experience (*mujarrabāt*), and matters known by intuition (*ḥadsiyyāt*) as part of that which we know through sensation. Von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik," 196; Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, 144.

2.2 *The Second Source of Knowledge: Transmitted Reports* (khabar)

Sense perception, for Ibn Taymiyya, is the most immediate, necessary, and undeniable source of knowledge. It is the source of all knowledge we have about our empirical world, and, in a fundamental sense, it lies at the base of all knowledge that we can have (even knowledge more proximately mediated to us via reason or transmitted reports). Yet for all its immediacy, poignancy, and undeniable concreteness, sensory knowledge is, ultimately, extremely limited, for it comprises only what each of us has personally witnessed himself. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a reality in which we had no knowledge of anything other than what we have come to know directly through our own limited sense perception. A moment's reflection will reveal that the vast majority of what we know about our world, both present and past, we have come to know through another source (or collection of sources), which can be grouped under the term "reports" (*akhbār*, sing. *khabar*). Literally everything we know about the objects and events of the world other than those we have personally witnessed—including past eras of human history as well as currently existing lands and peoples in far-off places, not to mention the ontological realm of the unseen (*ghayb*) proper—is ultimately based on some type of reporting (*ikhbār*) or transmission (*naql*). For this reason, Ibn Taymiyya describes reports as being more general and more comprehensive (*aʿamm wa-ashmal*) than sense perception, although sense perception—particularly that of sight—is more complete and more perfect (*atamm wa-akmal*).[35] Indeed, as the Arabic saying goes, "Hearing of a thing is not like seeing it."[36] Nevertheless, it is true that we can know through transmitted reports many times more than any given person could possibly witness himself. In this sense, it can be said that it is through reports that we are able to escape imprisonment in the vivid but narrow confines of what is perceptible to each of us in the current moment. And since "what is perceptible to each of us in the current moment" is the very definition of the visible, or *shāhid*, realm, it follows that anything we come to know through reports necessarily falls within the realm of the unseen, or *ghayb*, in one manner or another. Yet even reporting is ultimately grounded in sense perception (*ḥiss*), for anything accurately reported to us concerning any event, person, or place must originally have been experienced by *someone* through his senses, then passed on to others in the form of a transmitted report. At the reception end of this transmission process, it is also through our senses—primarily our sense of hearing, or *samʿ*—that we are able to receive these reports.

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[35] *Darʾ*, 7:324, lines 16–17.

[36] "*laysa al-mukhbar ka-l-muʿāyan.*" *Darʾ*, 7:325, line 3. He goes on to add that "not everything that is seen can be reported on, and the knowledge that comes about through reporting is not like the knowledge that comes about through direct witnessing."

The Arabic word *samʿ*, in this context, refers not just to hearing (reports) in general but to hearing a very specific and special type of "report," namely, divine revelation (in the form of the Qurʾān and authenticated prophetic *ḥadīth*). Revelation constitutes a report (*khabar*) insofar as it consists of "that of which the prophets have brought [us] news concerning the unseen" (*al-ghayb alladhī akhbarat bihi al-rusul*).[37] The reports that constitute revelation are, like any other transmitted report, ultimately based in sense perception, and this from two perspectives. First, revelation initially enters our world as a recited text that is first received, then subsequently transmitted, through *samʿ* (hearing), one of our primary external senses. Second, insofar as revelation reports to us primarily about the unseen realm, it is reporting about entities, realities, and events that are inherently perceptible (*maḥsūs*) even if they are (normally) veiled to our senses in the current world or have not yet come to pass. Even God Himself, for Ibn Taymiyya, is "perceptible" (as must be the case for any existent reality that is not merely a concept subsisting in the mind), in the sense that we can perceive Him through our internal sensation in the current world and through our external senses in the world to come. In sum, it is through transmitted reports (*khabar*) that we come to know a great deal about our world, what it currently contains and what has previously existed or occurred in it. Similarly, everything we know about the currently existing, parallel realm of the unseen (namely, that realm which is absent, by default, from human empirical experience in this world) is likewise known to us through transmitted reports—in this case, the special set of "reports" that constitute divine revelation. Such reports include information concerning the angels and *jinn*, heaven, hell, the primordial covenant (*al-mīthāq*)[38] and the creation of man, the life of the grave and the events of the last day, and other such matters. They also include, naturally, everything of which revelation informs us concerning the nature of God—most importantly, for Ibn Taymiyya, God's qualities and attributes.

Yet the world contains all manner of reports, and if we are dependent on such reports for so much of what we claim to know about our world, how can we distinguish authentic reports (those that Ibn Taymiyya refers to as *khabar ṣādiq*, or "true reports") from dubious ones? With respect to religious texts that convey knowledge of the unseen—namely, the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet—Ibn Taymiyya's views are fairly standard in the context of the Islamic scholarly tradition.[39] Any *ḥadīth* that is considered authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) according to the criteria of classical *ḥadīth* scholarship counts as a true report and can be taken as a reliable indicator of truth about reality. Absolute certainty of the veracity of a report's content is, however, reserved to those texts that have reached us through the process of *tawātur*, or recurrent mass transmission. Mass transmitted (*mutawātir*) reports are those that have been passed down from their origin on such a wide scale and from so many disparate and unrelated sources as to preclude the possibility that they could have been forged through collusion or conscious agreement (*tawāṭuʾ*).[40] The tradition of Islamic textual criticism recognizes the entire text of the Qurʾān as *mutawātir*, in addition to a (widely disagreed upon) number of *ḥadīth* reports. The concept of *tawātur* comprises not only the category of *tawātur lafẓī*, or verbatim *tawātur*, in which the report in question has been transmitted word for word in a massively recurrent fashion, but also the (numerically more significant) category of *tawātur maʿnawī*, or thematic *tawātur*, in which a common meaning is guaranteed through recurrent mass transmission despite (normally insignificant) differences in the precise wording of the reports. It is of note that, for Ibn Taymiyya, it is the same principle of *tawātur*—albeit not through the mechanism of formal *ḥadīth* reports supported by an explicit chain of transmission (*isnād*)—that we have come to know, for example, the legendary generosity of Ḥātim al-Ṭāʾī (d. 578 or ca. 605 CE) or, for that matter, the extraordinary life and circumstances of the Prophet Muḥammad on the basis of which the authenticity of his claim to prophecy can be substantiated.[41]

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[37] *Darʾ*, 9:14, line 16.

[38] See Q. *al-Aʿrāf* 7:172: "And when thy Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their progeny and made them bear witness concerning themselves, 'Am I not your Lord?' they said, 'Yea, we bear witness'—lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Truly of this we were heedless'" (trans. *The Study Quran*). On this verse and the concept of the primordial covenant, see Gramlich, "Der Urvertrag in der Koranauslegung (zu Sure 7, 172–173)."

Apart from the transmission of texts, the principle of *tawātur* also operates within the various religious scholarly disciplines to guarantee the authenticity of the knowledge cultivated in a particular field of study—specifically fields in which epistemic authenticity is directly linked to the faithful transmission of an early normative doctrine, as is the case in the majority of the Islamic religious sciences. Authoritative *tawātur* in such cases is to be judged by—and often only exists among—those most thoroughly versed in a particular field. In this manner, certain opinions of the iconic early grammarian Sībawayhi (d. ca. 180/796) may be *mutawātir* for the professional grammarian, though not for the non-specialist public. A similar situation obtains in fields such as medicine and the various Islamic religious disciplines.[42] In this vein—and in light of his overall theological concerns in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*—Ibn Taymiyya remarks that the various reports (*akhbār*) we have from the Prophet's Companions on fundamental theological issues (*al-masāʾil al-uṣūliyya*) are, in fact, far stronger and greater in number than many of the legal (*fiqh*) issues that are also *mutawātir* and that everyone accepts without quarrel.[43] In other words, there exists a particularly important subset of *mutawātir* reports that complement the set of reports constituting the Qurʾān and Sunna, namely, the *mutawātir* transmission of the positions and understandings—in creed as well as in legal matters—of the early authoritative generations of Muslims, the so-called *salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, or pious forebears.[44] This subcategory of *mutawātir* transmission relates, incidentally, to our discussion (in chapter 4) of the linguistic convention, as well as the known positions (*aqwāl*), of the Salaf,[45] to which Ibn Taymiyya accords such primacy in his hermeneutics of revelation and, indeed, in his overall theory of language and meaning.

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[39] For an overview of this tradition, see Brown, *Hadith*.

[40] For a detailed study of Ibn Taymiyya's views on *tawātur*, both as a topic of legal theory and more generally, see El-Tobgui, "From Legal Theory to *Erkenntnistheorie*" (esp. 18–33 for his views on *tawātur* as related to the transmission of texts). At *Radd*, 92–100, Ibn Taymiyya argues against those logicians who deny the use of mass transmitted reports in establishing knowledge, charging that such denial lies at the root of disbelief and heresy (*ilḥād*).

[41] For Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of the use of various classes of *ḥadīth* and the positions that have been held with respect to them, see *Darʾ*, 3:383, line 12 to 3:384, line 6.

To summarize, external reality is made up of innumerable discrete entities (*aʿyān*), some of which (namely, those in the *shahāda*, or visible realm) are empirically accessible to us now through our external senses (*ḥiss ẓāhir*), while others of which (namely, those in the *ghayb*, or unseen realm) are currently hidden from our external senses. We come to know the independent entities of the visible realm in a straightforward manner through our external sense perceptions. Whatever entities we know about in the unseen realm we come to know primarily through the vehicle of transmitted reports (*khabar*). An exception to this is an individual's sensation of his own soul and of God, two perceptible, self-standing particulars (*aʿyān maḥsūsa qāʾima bi-anfusihā*) that we can perceive not through our external senses (at least not in this world in the case of God) but through our internal sensation (*ḥiss bāṭin*).

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[42] For this discussion, see *Darʾ*, 8:44 ff. Zysow (*Economy of Certainty*, 22) mentions that this division of *mutawātir* reports into general (*ʿāmm*) and specialized (*khāṣṣ*) was "particularly dear to Ibn Taymiyya." See Zysow, 22, n. 88 for references to this division in numerous other works of Ibn Taymiyya and the discussion in El-Tobgui, "From Legal Theory to *Erkenntnistheorie*," 20–21.

[43] See *Darʾ*, 7:32, lines 1–6.

[44] On the elevation of exegetical reports from the Salaf to the status of certain, prophetic knowledge, see S. Ahmed, "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Satanic Verses," 78–86 and Saleh, "Radical Hermeneutics," esp. 128–131.

[45] See chapter 4, section 3 (p. 206 ff.) above. On the role of pre-Islamic poetry as an attestation (*shāhid*) of correct Arabic language use, see Suleiman, *Arabic Grammatical Tradition*, 19–22.

If such is Ibn Taymiyya's account of the *maḥsūs*, those objects that exist as independent particulars in the external world (*fī al-aʿyān*), then what is his account of the *maʿqūl*—that which exists, according to him, purely in the mind (*fī al-adhhān*)? We now consider this question at length.

3 The Realm of the Mind: What Exists *fī al-adhhān*?

3.1 *Universals*

We began this chapter by drawing attention to the fundamental distinction Ibn Taymiyya makes between the realm of the "*aʿyān*" (external existence) and that of the "*adhhān*" (mental existence). The conception of mental versus extra-mental existence delineated above has direct consequences for Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the philosophers' understanding of universals,[46] a critique that represents a principal lynchpin in his overall project of deconstructing philosophy and reconstructing in its place what he holds to be truly sound reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*). Ibn Taymiyya maintains that it is a matter of necessary knowledge that all existents fall into one of two mutually exclusive categories: that which exists independently (*mawjūd fī nafsihi*) in the external world and that which exists conceptually in the mind (*mutaṣawwar fī al-dhihn*).[47] In the preceding section, we discussed Ibn Taymiyya's contention that all externally existent entities (*aʿyān mawjūda fī al-khārij*) are, of necessity, perceptible (*maḥsūs*), either through external or through internal sensation. Ibn Taymiyya advances this thesis primarily against the philosophers' realist metaphysics, according to which abstract entities—particularly universals—enjoy real, extra-mental existence (whether independent of or inherent in instantiated particulars).[48] Thus, according to the philosophers, in addition to the set of all existing individual human beings, there exists universal man (*al-insān al-kullī*), or man in an absolute or unconditioned sense (*al-insān al-muṭlaq*). The existence of universal man is posited to be ontologically independent of the extant particulars, while the particulars are said (on the Platonic view) to "participate" (*tashtarik*) in the universal[49] or else (on the Aristotelian view) to inhere in each of the particulars.[50] It is by virtue of their participation in the universal that the particulars can be said to belong to one and the same species (*nawʿ*). How, then, do the philosophers account for the distinction between similar, though not completely identical, entities, such as the distinct individuals of one and the same species or individuals belonging to different species subsumed under a common genus?

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[46] On the philosophers' (particularly Ibn Sīnā's) doctrine of universals, see Marmura, "Avicenna's Chapter on Universals in the *Isagoge* of the *Shifāʾ*" and Marmura, "Quiddity and Universality in Avicenna."

[47] *Darʾ*, 5:135, lines 16–17.

[48] On Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the philosophers' realist conception of universals, see Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xx–xxiv.

To explain this difference, the philosophers hold that every individual entity is clearly distinct from every other individual entity and therefore differs from it in certain respects, owing to a difference in the specific attributes particular to each entity that coexist in it alongside the common universal. Thus, between any two individuals of a common species, there exist elements in which they share (*mā bihi al-ishtirāk*), namely, the universal with all its concomitant attributes (*lawāzim*), as well as elements in which they differ (*mā bihi al-ikhtilāf*), namely, the accidental qualities or attributes that do not form part of the essence and that differ from individual to individual within a species. For example, we may posit the existence of two horses, a palomino thoroughbred stallion and a roan-coated Arabian mare. Both are horses and thus (on the Aristotelian interpretation) participate in the universal category "horse," by virtue of which they both possess four legs, a mane, a tail, and other such attributes that are concomitant (*lāzim*) to universal horseness. Like all bodies, they also participate in the universal attribute of "color," though each has a different specific color. As both horses exist, they likewise participate in universal existence (*al-wujūd al-kullī*) while each also exists as a distinct entity by virtue of a particular existence specific to it (*wujūd muʿayyan yakhuṣṣuhu*). It is essential to retain that for the philosophers, not only does there exist between any two similar but non-identical entities a common factor (*qadr mushtarak*) and an element of differentiation (*qadr mumayyiz*), but the existence of the common factor is conceived of as involving an ontological, and not merely a logical or notional, sharing (*ishtirāk*) as well.[51] That is, the philosophers maintain that there is an actual ontological co-sharing in one and the same universal with respect to those aspects that are common to more than one individual. It is this metaphysical notion of a real, ontological sharing that, according to Ibn Taymiyya, led the philosophers to deny any positive attributes of God. This denial is motivated by their view that sharing of any sort would imply an ontological similarity between the two entities that share in the common universal, a conclusion that flows from their erroneous attribution of objective, external ontological existence to the universal concepts that Ibn Taymiyya insists inhere only in the mind. Therefore, to free God from any similarity (*tashbīh*) to created entities, the philosophers are forced to adopt a radically negationist theology of attributes predicated on the denial of any and all existential predications whatsoever (*salb al-umūr al-thubūtiyya*).[52]

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[49] On Plato's doctrine of universals as self-standing Forms in which particulars participate, see Shields, *Ancient Philosophy*, 68–88. See also MacLeod and Rubenstein, "Universals," section 2a, "Extreme Realism."

[50] On Aristotle's doctrine of universals as inhering in multiple disparate particulars, see MacLeod and Rubenstein, "Universals," section 2b, "Strong Realism."

[51] Ibid., section 2, "Versions of Realism."

In the face of this realist conception of universals, Ibn Taymiyya stridently and repeatedly insists that the philosophers have committed a fundamental category error by confusing purely *logical* reality with *ontological* reality. Ibn Taymiyya's rejection of the radical conceptual realism of the philosophers is evident in his denial of the existence of quiddities prior to the existence of particulars. Among the quiddities that he denies are the "non-existent," or *maʿdūm* (affirmed by the Muʿtazila, the Shīʿa, and the later Sufi "monists"), the Platonic forms, Aristotelian prime matter (*hayūlā*; Greek *ὑλη*/*hyle*), numbers as conceived in the doctrine of the Pythagoreans, time and place, the essences of species and genera, and the remaining universals.[53] As a result of this denial, Ibn Taymiyya has been described as adopting a "strict nominalist approach,"[54] at least as far as universals are concerned. Such a nominalism is hardly unique to Ibn Taymiyya, however, as it was also upheld by other figures such as Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī. Moreover, it has been remarked, such nominalistic tendencies "do not seem to have been uncommon in the midst of Sunnī theology and theory of law."[55] Apart from Ibn Taymiyya's strongly anti-realist view of universals, however, there are several other domains in which he, like his Peripatetic adversaries, was closer to being a "moderate realist," such that we can identify "major parts of human knowledge about particulars where he himself, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, adheres to 'moderate realism' and thus contradicts his absolute negation of it."[56]

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[52] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 9:339, lines 14–16: "*idh yuthbitūna wujūdan muṭlaqan aw mashrūṭan bi-salb al-umūr al-thubūtiyya aw al-thubūtiyya wa-l-ʿadamiyya wa-hādhā lā yakūnu illā fī al-adhhān*." See similar discussion at *Darʾ*, 1:217, 1:286–289, and 5:140–145 (esp. 5:142–143).

[53] Von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik," 181–182; von Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 293.

[54] Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xlvi.

[55] Ibid.

[56] See von Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 293. These points are further elaborated at von Kügelgen, 306–322.

Notwithstanding his moderate realism in domains related to particulars, Ibn Taymiyya is consistent and unrelenting in his rejection of the philosophers' realist ontology of universals. This is especially true for the so-called "natural universal" (*al-kullī al-ṭabīʿī*) that pertains to extant genera and species[57] (such as the universal notion of "man" or "horse"), which, Ibn Taymiyya insists, can only exist in the external world in the form of discrete, instantiated particulars.[58] According to Ibn Taymiyya, from the similarities evident among, for instance, individual horses, the mind abstracts (*yujarrid*)[59] from the empirically observed particulars the universal notion of "horse," under which it then classifies and subsumes all extant members of the class (in this case, all existing horses).[60] He notes, however, that "horse," as a universal, is precisely a notion—that is, a concept, or "*maʿnā*". As such, it exists only in the mind and possesses, independent of its externally existent particulars, neither existence nor reality in the external world.[61] Another way of stating the matter is that what exists in the mind as a universal concept exists in the external world only in the form of individual, instantiated particulars.[62] As the universal itself exists only in the mind, the particulars can be said to "participate" in the universal only in a purely logical, not an ontological, sense.[63] Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya insists that just as there is no externally existing universal in which the individuals of a species participate (as per the Platonic model), so too is there no sense in which the universal inheres, in a substantive ontological sense, in the individuals (as per the Aristotelian model).[64]

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[57] See *Darʾ*, 3:39, where Ibn Taymiyya identifies the natural universal with the "universal that is unconditioned [by universality]" (*al-kullī al-muṭlaq lā bi-sharṭ*), that is, conceived such that it can apply to actual extant particulars in the world. (See further on this at *Darʾ*, 4:254–255.)

[58] "*lā yūjadu illā muʿayyanan juzʾiyyan*." See *Darʾ*, 6:92, lines 11–12.

[59] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 6:275, line 16 and 10:103, lines 13–14 (with "*yantaziʿ*" given as a synonym of *yujarrid* at this latter). See also *Darʾ*, 6:32, line 10, where he speaks of "*al-ʿaqliyyāt al-kulliyya al-muntazaʿa min al-muʿayyanāt*." This is not to say, however, that all universals in the mind are necessarily extracted from particulars. Ibn Taymiyya remarks that "the particulars [subsumed under some] universal propositions have existence in the external world, while others are conceived of in the mind and do not exist as particulars" (*wa-l-qaḍāyā al-kulliyya tāratan yakūnu li-juzʾiyyātihā wujūd fī al-khārij wa-tāratan takūnu maqdūra fī al-adhhān lā wujūda lahā fī al-aʿyān*). *Darʾ*, 6:98, lines 1–3.

[60] On this abstracting function of the mind, see Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xx, xxiii, xxxiii; von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik," 182.

[61] Ibn Taymiyya maintains that the impossibility of a universal existing in the external world qua universal is a proposition that is known to be true by necessity. *Darʾ*, 6:92, lines 10–11.

[62] See, e.g., Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xxii, where he confirms that Ibn Taymiyya affirms this view "in literally dozens of his treatises," including *Naqḍ al-manṭiq*, *Jahd al-qarīḥa*, *Muwāfaqat ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl* (i.e., *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*), *Furqān*, *Kitāb al-Ulūhiyya*, *Kitāb al-Rubūbiyya*, and others. (See Hallaq, xxii, n. 52 for these works, with page references.) See also *Darʾ*, 4:255, line 2 ("*kullī fī al-adhhān mukhtaṣṣ fī al-aʿyān*"); *Darʾ*, 5:35, line 9: "states (*aḥwāl*) are like universals; they exist in the mind, not as [externally existent] particulars"; and similar at *Darʾ*, 5:90, 5:95, 5:141, 6:18, 6:26–27, 6:92, 6:95, 6:161–163, and 10:295.

[63] See, inter alia, *Darʾ*, 4:254 and 5:90–95 (esp. at 5:93, 95).

In discussing the notion of abstract(ed) universals (*al-kulliyyāt al-mujarrada*) like absolute or unconditioned humanity (*al-insāniyya al-muṭlaqa*), unconditioned animality (*al-ḥayawāniyya al-muṭlaqa*), unconditioned body (*al-jism al-muṭlaq*), unconditioned existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), and so forth, Ibn Taymiyya remarks that "there exists nothing in external reality that is unconditioned (*muṭlaq*) and non-particularized (*ghayr muʿayyan*). Rather, a thing can only exist particularized (*muʿayyan*) and individuated (*mushakhkhaṣ*), and that is what is perceptible (*wa-huwa al-maḥsūs*)."[65] He goes on to explain that those who are in error among the philosophers affirm the existence of abstract mental concepts in the external world (*al-ʿaqliyyāt al-mujarrada fī al-khārij*). Such philosophers include, in Ibn Taymiyya's words,

> the Pythagoreans, who affirm abstract numbers, and the followers of Plato, who affirm the Platonic forms, such as abstract quiddities, abstract prime matter, abstract duration, and an abstract void. As for the followers of Aristotle, like al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, they refuted their forebears' position [which consisted of] affirming such universals as being abstracted from [i.e., independent of] particulars, but they [themselves] affirmed them as being in association with the particulars (*muqārina lil-aʿyān*) … Yet upon proper investigation, [it turns out that] there exists nothing in the external world but particular entities with the qualities that subsist in them (*lam yūjad fī al-khārij illā al-aʿyān bi-ṣifātihā al-qāʾima bihā*).[66]

Indeed, he explains further, any existing member of a given species—in fact, any existing entity at all—is qualified by a separate existence that is unique to it and in which nothing else shares (ontologically speaking) in any way. Thus,

> this human being does not coincide with (*yuwāfiq*) that one in his [specific] humanity (*fī nafs insāniyyatihi*) [i.e., they are not one person] but coincides with him in an absolute [or unconditioned] humanity (*insāniyya muṭlaqa*); yet it is impossible for this absolute to subsist in any

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[64] See *Darʾ*, 1:216 (esp. lines 12–15).

[65] *Darʾ*, 5:174, lines 6–7.

[66] *Darʾ*, 5:174, lines 8–16. (See index of Arabic passages.) For similar discussions, see, e.g., *Darʾ*, 6:29–32 and 10:171. On the *jawāhir ʿaqliyya/maʿqūla*, see, inter alia, *Darʾ*, 4:184, 5:146, 5:174, 5:202, 6:162–163, 7:126, 7:142, 7:221, 8:250, 9:124, 10:77–78, and 10:81–82.

> particular. The absolute in which they coincide cannot itself exist in the external world, let alone be constitutive of (*muqawwim li*) any thing. Particular things are therefore not constituted by [anything absolute]; rather, they are constituted only by that which is specific to them and in which nothing else shares with them.[67]

The only "sharing" that occurs is their common subsumption by the mind under a universal concept, which, being only a concept, enjoys no more than logical existence *in the mind*.[68]

Given the radical particularity of each existing entity and its full ontological independence from any other thing, how does Ibn Taymiyya account for the nature of the similarity observed among existent entities that are subsumed, by the mind, under a common universal? For any two things that exist, he explains, there is necessarily that which they have in common (*jāmiʿ*, or *qadr mushtarak*) and that by which each is distinguished from the other (*fāriq*, or *qadr mumayyiz*). No matter how different the two things may be overall, they nevertheless share, at a minimum, in the fact that they exist and, more specifically, that each exists by virtue of an independent ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*) that constitutes its essence (*dhātuhu*), its self (*nafsuhu*), and its quiddity (*māhiyyatuhu*).[69] Anything in which two distinct entities share is, necessarily, an absolute or unconditioned notion (*maʿnā muṭlaq*) that, being universal and unqualified, can only exist in the mind. Thus, two animals are said to share in an absolute or unconditioned animality (*ḥayawāniyya muṭlaqa*) that exists as a concept in the mind only. Each one is, however, distinct from the other by virtue of the particular, externally existent animality specific to it (*al-ḥayawāniyya allatī takhuṣṣuhu*)[70] and in which none other shares with it ontologically in any way. Notwithstanding, there exists a measure of resemblance and similarity (*tashābuh wa-tamāthul*) among externally existing particulars, as well as a measure of difference and contrariety (*ikhtilāf wa-taḍādd*).[71] Yet the perception of this resemblance and difference is a judgement (*ḥukm*) operated by the mind after it has abstracted the qualities of each thing, then compared and contrasted them for the purpose of classification.[72] The essential point is that the mere existence of similarity in certain respects does not involve any *ontological* sharing or commonality between the two entities. This is because sharing, for Ibn Taymiyya, is a strictly ontological category and it is clear that the two entities in question are ontologically distinct, each fully particularized and individuated and, hence, independent of the other. Ibn Taymiyya, in fact, compares universal notions to generic terms (*alfāẓ ʿāmma*) with respect to how each class relates to the specific entities it denotes. The applicability of universals to their particulars, he explains, is parallel to the universality or general applicability of generic terms to the various objects they designate.[73] Just as there is no ontological commonality or sharing between two human beings simply because the generic term "man" applies to both of them, so too is their sharing in the concept or meaning (*maʿnā*) that is signified by the word (that is, their sharing in all the concomitants of universal man that both necessarily exhibit) purely a matter of cognition and mental recognition for the purposes of logical classification. In external reality, although the meaning of the term "man" applies to both individuals equally, each is nevertheless independent of the other in his particular existence (*wujūd muʿayyan*) and his particular ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa muʿayyana*) and in no way "shares with" the other in any externally existing reality whatsoever.[74]

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[67] *Darʾ*, 5:94, lines 3–8. (See index of Arabic passages.) For similar, see *Darʾ*, 5:112, 5:115–116, 5:150–151, 5:173–174, 6:26–27, 6:29–30, and 7:126, among others.

[68] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 5:139, lines 13–14: "*lā shirkata fī al-aʿyān al-mawjūda al-juzʾiyyāt*." See also *Darʾ*, 4:253, lines 16–17, where Ibn Taymiyya states, "*laysa fī al-mawjūdāt shayʾāni mā* ***yattafiqāni*** *fī shayʾ bi-ʿaynihi mawjūd fī al-khārij* [such as a would-be externally existent universal in which several objects partake on the level of their ontological reality and makeup] *wa-lākin* ***yashtabihāni*** *min baʿḍ al-wujūh*" (There are no two existent entities that share in any specific, externally existing thing, but rather they resemble each other in some aspects).

[69] See *Darʾ*, 5:83, line 18 to 5:84, line 1: "*mā min mawjūdayni illā baynahumā qadr mushtarak wa-qadr mumayyiz fa-innahumā lā budda an yashtarikā fī annahumā mawjūdāni thābitāni ḥāṣilāni wa-anna kullan minhumā lahu ḥaqīqa hiya dhātuhu wa-nafsuhu wa-māhiyyatuhu*." See also von Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 313–318.

[70] *Darʾ*, 5:140, line 7.

In short, every existent entity is none other than itself and does not share ontologically in anything with any other entity. Any two existent entities are said to be different (*mukhtalif*) if difference is meant as the counterpart (*qasīm*) of (ontological) sharing (*ishtirāk*). With respect to the two entities exhibiting qualities or possessing attributes denoted by a single name—as in both being "blue," for example—then any two entities will, naturally, be more or less similar (*mutashābih*) or different (*mukhtalif*) depending on the number of qualities they have in common. Two instantiated instances of the color white, for example, would not be "different" in this second (notional and qualitative) sense, although they are different in the first (ontological) sense since each instance of white—existing, as it does, as a distinct instantiation of the universal color inhering in a discrete entity—is ontologically distinct from the other and does not share anything with it in terms of its ontological constitution or the reality of its external existence. Furthermore, there is no necessary concomitance (*talāzum*) between the universals (as concepts in the mind) and externally existing entities (*al-mawjūdāt al-khārijiyya*), for there may exist various discrete entities in the external world that a person perceives yet does so without abstracting, or consciously conceiving of, a universal concept that would subsume them. Conversely, one may conceive universal notions in the mind (*kulliyyāt maʿqūla*) that do not correspond to any externally existing reality but are only mental hypotheses (*muqaddarāt dhihniyya*),[75] such as what Ibn Taymiyya refers to as "inherently [that is, logically] impossible species" (*al-anwāʿ al-mumtaniʿa li-dhātihā*), which would presumably include things like the incoherent notion of a "square circle" or a "five-sided hexagon." From this, it follows that one may never infer that a thing exists, or could exist, in the external world simply because it can be conceived of in the mind.[76]

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[71] See *Darʾ*, 5:93, line 10: "*bayna al-muʿayyanāt tashābuh wa-ikhtilāf wa-taḍādd*" and similar at *Darʾ*, 5:89, lines 1–2 ("*al-tamāthul wa-l-ikhtilāf wa-l-taḍādd wa-l-taghāyur al-lawāzim lil-ḥaqāʾiq al-kathīra al-mukhtalifa*") and 5:96, lines 13–14.

[72] On this process of abstraction, see Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xx, xxiii, xxxiii.

[73] "*iʿtabir ʿumūm al-maʿānī wa-l-ishtirāk fīhimā bi-ʿumūm al-alfāẓ wa-l-ishtirāk fīhimā.*" *Darʾ*, 5:100, lines 1–2.

[74] See Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xxii on each individual existent being unique "in the context of a reality (*ḥaqīqa*) that is different from other realities." In addition to the logical arguments he advances, Ibn Taymiyya also rests his appeal for the radical uniqueness of each individual on the Qurʾān (though he does not cite a specific verse). Ibid., xxii, n. 55. It follows from this doctrine that individual objects classed by the mind under a common genus or species are not, in fact, identical in essence since, for Ibn Taymiyya, the essence of a thing is inseparable from its existence and the existence of each thing is unique to it alone.

3.2 *Essence and Existence, Essence and Attributes*

A related aspect of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of universals involves the relationship between a thing's essence (*dhāt*) or reality (*ḥaqīqa*) and its existence (*wujūd*).[77] The Peripatetic philosophers, Ibn Taymiyya informs us, posit an independent essence or quiddity (*māhiyya*) to which existence is superadded, resulting in the ontological instantiation of the particular object at hand.[78] On this view, then, any extant object in the world exists as a result of the accident of existence being conferred upon its pre-existing essence. Yet here again, Ibn Taymiyya insists that "essence" in the sense of a thing's quiddity, or *māhiyya* (lit. "what-it-is-ness"), is a notional reality that, as such, exists only in the mind.[79] As for an externally existing object, its essence (*dhāt*) and reality (*ḥaqīqa*) are none other than its very existence (*wujūd*), inclusive of all the various attributes concomitant to it and without which it could not exist. Just as the universal is a concept that only exists in the mind, so too are the separability of essence and existence, on the one hand, and the separability of essence and attributes, on the other, concepts that only exist in the mind. Stated another way, the mind can very well *conceive* of a thing's essence (that is, its quiddity) separately from its existence, but just as we have seen with universal concepts, the essence so conceived is merely an abstraction of the mind based on a particular existent (or an imaginary object, such as a unicorn). As for the extant object, its essence and its reality are synonymous with its factual, individual, particularized existence in the external world, inclusive of all the concomitant attributes by which it is qualified, without which it could not exist, and in which it does not share anything ontologically with any other existent object. In a sense, then, Ibn Taymiyya conflates *that* a thing is with *what* the thing is, maintaining that the two are only separable in the mind. In the real world, a thing both *is* ("*inniyya*") and is *something* ("*māhiyya*") at one and the same time, with no objective *onto-*

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[75] See *Darʾ*, 6:98, line 5.

[76] On this point in general, see *Darʾ*, 5:134, lines 9–15. But, one may ask, if something is logically incoherent (like a "five-sided hexagon"), then how can it even be conceived? Are we to understand Ibn Taymiyya as simply saying that we can speak of such a thing although we cannot properly conceive of it (as opposed to the fact that we *can* conceive of a unicorn, which, though not actually existent, nonetheless constitutes a logically coherent notion)? It seems best to understand Ibn Taymiyya as maintaining that such notions can be hypothesized (*tuqaddar*) in the mind, even if intrinsically incoherent. Their impossibility (*imtināʿ*) would then stem from the fact that they could not exist in external ontological reality, precisely because they are logically incoherent.

[77] See related discussion at *Radd*, 64–69, "al-kalām ʿalā al-farq bayna al-māhiyya wa-wujūdihā" and Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xx–xxiv.

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[78] On the relationship between essence and existence in Ibn Sīnā, see Lizzini, "Ibn Sina's Metaphysics" and, more extensively, Bertolacci, "The Distinction of Essence and Existence in Avicenna's Metaphysics," as well as Wisnovsky, "Essence and Existence." Wisnovsky affirms that Ibn Sīnā does not, in fact, seem to have committed himself to the position described here, despite the existence of a lone statement in his *Taʿlīqāt* to the contrary. Rather, he seems to have held that "essence and existence are extensionally identical but intensionally distinct," meaning that "every essence must either be an individual existing in the concrete, extra-mental world (*fī l-aʿyān*), or a universal existing in the mind (*fī ḏ-ḏihn*)" (Wisnovsky, "Essence and Existence," 28–29). This, as we shall see, is the same position that Ibn Taymiyya advocates, and, in fact, it was Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī who advocated most prominently for the position that Ibn Taymiyya holds here against the Peripatetics. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya's charge against the philosophers is identical to Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī's charges against them. (Wisnovsky, 28–29).

[79] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 1:288, lines 1–3: "They distinguish in their logic between essence [or quiddity] and existence; had they explained 'essence' as that which is in the mind and 'existence' as that which is in [the realm of] external particulars, that would have been correct and indisputable on the part of any rational person" (*farraqū fī manṭiqihim bayna al-māhiyya wa-l-wujūd wa-hum law fassarū al-māhiyya bi-mā yakūnu fī al-adhhān wa-l-wujūd bi-mā yakūnu fī al-aʿyān la-kāna hādhā ṣaḥīḥan lā yunāziʿu fīhi ʿāqil*). See also Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xvi–xx.

logical distinction between its *inniyya*[80] (its being, *esse*, “that it is,” or “thatness”) and its *māhiyya* (its essence, quiddity, “what it is,” or “whatness”).[81]

It follows from this position that the existence of an entity can in no way be superadded to a pre-existing essence or quiddity. Essence and attributes can be conceived of as separate in the mind but do not exist separately—or as separable—in the external world. Ibn Taymiyya identifies this as a key area in which the philosophers have mistaken logical distinctions in the mind for ontological reality in the outside world of existent entities. That is, they take the logical distinctions of the mind as “primary,” in a sense, and simply assume a direct correspondence between logical categories or distinctions and the ontological reality of externally existing entities (*ḥaqāʾiq*).[82] This prioritization of logical notions and mental categories, together with the assumption that they directly map onto ontological reality[83]—what we may call the philosophers’ “intellectualization” or “rationalization” of reality—is a key target of Ibn Taymiyya’s attack in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* against some of the most fundamental assumptions driving the philosophers’ speculative enterprise. As we have seen, Ibn Taymiyya argues against the philosophers that the very existence (*wujūd*) of an entity, along with all its concomitant attributes and qualities, is identical with that entity’s quiddity (*māhiyya*) and comprises its fundamental ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*) in the external world, in other words, as it factually exists “out there” (*fī al-khārij*), independent of our mental conception of it.[84] Another way of stating this is that a thing’s quiddity is none other than its very existence.[85] That is, the question of *what* a thing is (its “what-ness”) is answered by considering its factual existence (its “that-ness”)—in particular, not merely the fact *that* it exists but, more relevantly, *how* it exists, with all its ontologically inseparable concomitants (*lawāzim*).[86]

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[80] On the origins of *inniyya/anniyya* as a technical term, see Frank, “The Origin of the Arabic Philosophical Term انية.” For its use in Ibn Sīnā specifically, see Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology*, 111–112 ff.

[81] This would seem to be similar to Ibn Sīnā’s notion of God as possessing no quiddity (*māhiyya*) separate from His being/existence (*wujūd*). See, for example, Acar, *Talking about God and Talking about Creation*, 81–85.

[82] See, for example, the discussion at *Darʾ*, 3:79.

[83] See Gutas, “Logic of Theology,” 60–61; Adamson, “Non-Discursive Thought,” esp. 93–98.

[84] “*wujūd kulli shayʾ ʿayn māhiyyatihi fī al-khārij*.” *Darʾ*, 3:248, line 13.

[85] For this formulation, see *Darʾ*, 5:103, lines 7–8 and 5:104, lines 6–7. See similar at *Darʾ*, 1:293, lines 14–15: “*bal māhiyyatuhu hiya ḥaqīqatuhu wa-hiya wujūduhu*” (its essence is its ontological reality and its existence). See also *Darʾ*, 5:102–104 for a discussion of the relationship between quiddity and existence more generally.

[86] See also, e.g., *Darʾ*, 3:328, lines 6–7, where Ibn Taymiyya makes the point that “the essence is more rightfully considered constitutive of the attributes than the attributes are of the essence” (*al-dhāt hiya aḥaqq bi-taqwīm al-ṣifāt min al-ṣifāt bi-taqwīm al-dhāt*).

As an illustration of this principle, we may cite Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the philosophers for positing the independent external existence of intelligible substances (*jawāhir maʿqūla*) alongside perceptible bodies (*ajsām maḥsūsa*), such as the well-known Aristotelian distinction between matter and form.[87] While Ibn Taymiyya does not deny that extant objects are indeed made up of matter existing in a particular form, he does deny—predictably—that the abstract form enjoys an ontological existence separate from and independent of matter that is then superimposed upon matter, resulting in the instantiation of the object in question. Rather, Ibn Taymiyya insists, the only thing that actually exists—in other words, the only thing that has an independent ontological reality as a real entity existing "out there" (*fī al-khārij*)—is the form-endowed material object itself.[88] The form is in no way separable from the substantive existence of the object and can only be conceived of separately from its material constitution as a result of the abstracting function of the mind. The philosophers' conception of form as an "intelligible substance" existing alongside body parallels, in a sense, their affirmation of universal concepts existing independent of—albeit in association with (*muqārin li*)—the individual instantiated objects they subsume, whereas in reality, Ibn Taymiyya counters, the only thing existing in the external world is the particular entities (*aʿyān*) themselves along with the attributes (*ṣifāt*) inherent in them.[89]

Along the same lines, we may cite Ibn Taymiyya's critique of Ibn Sīnā for comparing the association (*muqārana*) of the soul with the body to that of universals with their particulars. Ibn Taymiyya refutes this confusion by pointing out that unlike universal concepts, which only exist in the mind, the soul is a particular entity (*muʿayyan*) that exists in its own right (that is, in the outside world and not as a mere concept in the mind), and, like all externally existing entities, it is perceptible (*maḥsūs*). On the nature of the soul and its relationship to the body in contrast with the relationship of universal concepts to their particulars, Ibn Taymiyya says:

> The soul (*rūḥ*) is a particular and the body is a particular, and the association of one with the other is possible. But they [the philosophers] confuse [on the one hand] the association of the soul with the body and its

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[87] *Darʾ*, 5:174, lines 11–13. On the reception and elaboration of this doctrine by Ibn Sīnā, see Bertolacci, "Doctrine of Material and Formal Causality."

[88] In this passage, Ibn Taymiyya says "a body and its accidents" ([*lam*] *yūjad fī al-khārij illā al-jism wa-aʿrāḍuhu*). *Darʾ*, 5:174, line 14.

[89] "*lam yūjad fī al-khārij illā al-aʿyān wa-ṣifātuhā al-qāʾima bihā.*" *Darʾ*, 5:174, lines 15–16.

> abstraction from it with [on the other hand] the association of universals with their particulars and their abstraction from them. [Yet] the difference between the two is more patent than to require exposition …, for the *rūḥ*, which is the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*), exists in external reality as an independent entity when it separates from the body. As for universal mental concepts that are abstracted from particulars (*al-ʿaqliyyāt al-kulliyya al-muntazaʿa min al-muʿayyanāt*), they exist only in the mind (*fī al-adhhān*), not as externally existent entities (*fī al-aʿyān*). Thus, it is necessary to differentiate between the dissociation of the soul from the body (*tajrīd al-rūḥ ʿan al-badan*) and the abstraction of universals from particulars (*tajrīd al-kulliyyāt ʿan al-muʿayyanāt*).[90]

The soul's association with the body is thus a case of two particular, externally existing entities that are connected to each other and that can also undergo dissociation (*tajrīd*) from each other, as happens upon the death of the body. This, Ibn Taymiyya insists, is entirely different from the contention that universals inhere in, or are associated with, their particulars in the same manner as the soul may be said to indwell, or to be associated with, the body. The confusion here, according to Ibn Taymiyya, results from the fact that the philosophers have applied the terms "association" and "dissociation" both to universals and to the soul analogically (*bi-l-ishtirāk*) while failing to distinguish between the *ontological* dissociation of the soul from the body (as two independent, perceptible entities), on the one hand, and the *logical* abstraction (*intizāʿ*) of universals from their particulars carried out by the mind, on the other. The common applicability of the same term with the same meaning to two distinct entities neither entails nor implies any *essential* similarity between the entities in question, since the term applies to each in a manner commensurate with its own distinct ontological reality, or *ḥaqīqa*. For Ibn Taymiyya, the "real story," as we have seen, is not the meaning or abstracted notion (*maʿnā*) existing in our minds but the factual, particularized, individual existence (*wujūd*) of the thing in question. It is this concrete existence that is constitutive of—in fact, is synonymous with—the thing's essence (*dhāt*) and factual ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*) and that, furthermore, determines the manner in which a common term and meaning apply to it specifically, in contrast to how they might apply to another entity of which the same term (and meaning) is predicated. In the case under discussion here, this means that one of the elements to which the terms "association" and "dissociation" legitimately apply (namely, the soul) exists ontologically as an independent entity (*ʿayn*) in the external world, while the other element to which they legitimately apply (namely, the universal) is but a logical notion subsisting strictly within the confines of the mind.

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[90] See *Darʾ*, 6:32, lines 1–12. (See index of Arabic passages.)

4 The Structure of Reason[91]

What, then, is the structure of reason (*ʿaql*), according to Ibn Taymiyya, and how does it function in the acquisition of knowledge? Ibn Taymiyya defines reason as an "instinct in man" (*gharīza fī al-insān*)[92] that is essentially endowed with the capacity to perform three vital functions: (1) to abstract universals from particulars, based on reason's ability to recognize relevant similarities between particular existents and abstract these into universal concepts;[93] (2) to confer assent (*taṣdīq*) or formulate judgements (*aḥkām*) in the form of predicative statements relating to existent particulars;[94] and (3) to draw inferences of various sorts through which new knowledge is derived (essentially, by transferring a given judgement, or *ḥukm*, from a given subject or entity to a new one).[95] In the previous section, we addressed the first vital function of reason, namely, the formation of universal concepts on the basis of the extant particulars delivered to it by the senses. In Ibn Taymiyya's words:

> What sense perception yields as a particular, reason and analogical inference yield as universal and absolute (or unconditioned). [These latter]

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[91] A summary of this section, including a substantial portion of the sub-section "*Fiṭra*: The Original Normative Disposition" (p. 260 ff. below), the entirety of the sub-section "*Tawātur* as the Final Epistemic Guarantor" (p. 267 ff. below), and related sections of chapter 6, has appeared previously at El-Tobgui, "From Legal Theory to *Erkenntnistheorie*," 34–54.

[92] *Darʾ*, 6:50, line 5. See also *Darʾ*, 1:89, line 7 for reason as *al-gharīza allatī fīnā* (the instinct that is within us).

[93] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 6:88, lines 9–10 (*sāʾir al-qaḍāyā al-kulliyya allatī mabādiʾuhā min al-ḥiss*) and 8:248, lines 8–9 (*kamā yuqaddiru* [*al-dhihn*] *al-kulliyyāt al-mujarrada ʿan al-aʿyān*), as well as the discussion at *Darʾ*, 7:317–327.

[94] On the term *taṣdīq* (assent) and the related term *taṣawwur* (conception), see Wolfson, "The Terms *Taṣawwur* and *Taṣdīq*," 114–119. For these terms in Ibn Sīnā specifically, see Sabra, "Avicenna on the Subject Matter of Logic," 757–761. (Cited in Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xv, n. 20.)

[95] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 5:259 ff. on *al-iʿtibār wa-l-qiyās*; *Darʾ*, 7:317–327 (esp. 7:322 ff.) on logical principles and rules of inference more generally; *Darʾ*, 2:218–219 on the burden of proof between rational arguments and revealed texts and the three levels of rational refutation; and *Darʾ*, 3:264, 3:305–318, 7:352, 7:374–382, and 7:388–389 on the use of rational inferences and arguments in the Qurʾān. On the Qurʾān's extensive deployment of rational argumentation more broadly, see Gwynne, *Logic, Rhetoric, and Legal Reasoning*, *passim*.

> do not engender the knowledge of any particular [existent] thing; rather, they render the specific general and the particular absolute [i.e., universal], for universals are only known through reason, just as particular existents are only known through sensation.[96]

As mentioned in our discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's account of ontology above, the universal notions—particularly the "natural universal" (*al-kullī al-ṭabīʿī*) that subsumes extant objects—are derived from the particulars and are akin to still-frame snapshots of the particulars' essential qualities, recording and representing ontological reality to the mind. In a sense, they form the raw data about the world which the mind then processes and reasons about. As we shall discover, this universalizing function of the mind, for Ibn Taymiyya, also plays a crucial role in affording us access—in conjunction with transmitted reports—to the realm of the unseen, insofar as it enables us to comprehend and conceive what we are being told about this realm through the transmission of true reports (*khabar ṣādiq*). Even more important, this universalizing function of the mind, as we explore in greater detail in chapter 6, is critical for our knowledge of God and, specifically, for our ability to understand who God is as a discrete personal being.[97]

In addition to the knowledge of externally existing objects appropriated and registered by the mind in the form of universal concepts, the rational faculty also has at its disposal certain logical axioms and relational principles that are implanted in it a priori and that it therefore knows in a self-evident (*badīhī*) manner.[98] Related to though not identical with self-evident, a priori knowledge is that which Ibn Taymiyya refers to as necessary or immediate (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge,[99] a type of knowledge that he often refers to interchangeably by the term

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[96] *Darʾ*, 7:324, lines 12–15. (See index of Arabic passages.)

[97] See pp. 280–281, 284, and, more generally, 285–288 below.

[98] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 6:267 (*al-ʿulūm al-badīhiyya*); 6:112, 9:161 (*al-qaḍāyā al-badīhiyya*); 3:309 (*ʿulūm badīhiyya awwaliyya yabtadiʾuhā Allāh fī qalb* [*al-insān*]); 6:16 (*al-badīha al-ṣaḥīḥa*); 8:314 (*al-muqaddima al-badīhiyya al-ṣaḥīḥa al-sharʿiyya*).

[99] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 1:185, 3:96, 5:312, 6:268, 7:21 (*al-ʿulūm al-ḍarūriyya*); 3:418 (*al-maʿārif al-ḍarūriyya*); 7:403 (*al-qaḍāyā al-ḍarūriyya*); 6:192 (*al-umūr al-ḍarūriyya*); 3:244, 6:11 (*al-ḍarūriyyāt*); 8:264 (*ḍarūrī fī al-ʿaql*); 6:192 (*ḍarūrāt al-ʿuqūl*); 8:311 (*badīhī ḍarūrī*); 3:230 (*qaḍiyya badīhiyya ḍarūriyya*); 9:360 (*al-maʿālim al-badīhiyya al-ḍarūriyya*); 9:121–122 (*ṭuruq ḍarūriyya*); 6:50: reason as an "instinct in man" or "a kind of necessary knowledge" (*nawʿ min al-ʿulūm al-ḍarūriyya*); 8:282: knowledge of the existence of the Maker (al-Ṣāniʿ) ingrained of necessity in the human constitution (*min lawāzim khalqihim ḍarūrī fīhim*); 8:438 (and similar at 3:98–99, 8:488–489): knowledge of God "*ḍarūriyya*"; 9:422–425: on four meanings of *ḍarūra* and the nature of *ḍarūrī* knowledge with respect to the knower.

fiṭrī[100] (approximately, "innate") or by the compound term *ḍarūrī-fiṭrī*.[101] While all a priori knowledge and axiomatic principles are, by definition, both innate and necessary, not all necessary knowledge is a priori or innate, for Ibn Taymiyya recognizes a number of other sources of necessary knowledge. Finally, and to complicate matters further, innate (*fiṭrī*) knowledge only partly overlaps with a priori and necessary knowledge, as *fiṭrī* knowledge is a considerably wider and subtler category, as we shall see below.

4.1 *Self-Evident and A Priori Knowledge*

We have discussed Ibn Taymiyya's strident insistence that universals (*kulliyyāt*) are strictly conceptual or notional realities subsisting in the mind and that the mind abstracts them from the existing particulars mediated to it through the senses. Absent the instantiated particulars, there can be, quite simply, no universals. This is most obviously the case with the natural universal (*al-kullī al-ṭabīʿī*), which I have described as a kind of snapshot that the mind takes of a particular class of entities in the external world. Yet Ibn Taymiyya also discusses another kind of universal: namely, the universal rules of logic, such as the law of non-contradiction, the law of the excluded middle, and the law of identity.[102] Ibn Taymiyya repeatedly refers to such universal rules, and other self-evident propositions, as being necessary (*ḍarūrī*), but he also applies a term to them that he does not use nearly as liberally as "necessary" (or "necessary" coupled with "innate," i.e., *ḍarūrī-fiṭrī*). While Ibn Taymiyya obviously regards such fundamental rules of thought as necessary, he also refers to them as being *badīhī*, or *min al-badīhiyyāt*, or *min badāʾih al-ʿuqūl*. The use of the term *badīhī* correlates strongly with the notion of a priori knowledge, and we may tentatively conclude, on the basis of his use of this term, that Ibn Taymiyya indeed regards such universal logical notions as a priori in the true sense, that is, in the sense of being present both in and to the mind prior to any encounter of the mind with the external world via the senses.[103] In another passage, he refers to "immediate, certain, primary (or a priori) knowledge" (*ʿilm ḍarūrī yaqīnī awwalī*), which he defines as "depending neither on discursive reasoning nor on demonstration; rather," he continues, such knowledge "constitutes the very premises and axioms upon which demonstrative proofs are built."[104] In support of this interpretation of *badīhī* as a priori, we may cite, for instance, Ibn Taymiyya's characterization of violating the law of the excluded middle as being "the most patently impossible of things *fī badīhat al-ʿaql*."[105] In another passage, he describes the knowledge of the impossibility of an infinite regress of agents (*al-tasalsul fī al-fāʿilīn*) as being "innate" (*fiṭrī*) and "necessary" (*ḍarūrī*)—terms we have seen before—but then he makes the further point that all premises in a given argument must ultimately be based on "primordial, a priori knowledge that God initiates in [a person's] heart/mind" (*ʿulūm badīhiyya awwaliyya yabtadiʾuhā Allāh fī qalb* [*al-insān*]).[106] Ibn Taymiyya's pairing of the term *badīhī*

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[100] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 6:14 (*al-badīhiyyāt al-fiṭriyya*); 3:317 (*al-ʿulūm al-ḥissiyya al-fiṭriyya*); 8:453 (*al-maʿrifa al-fiṭriyya*); 7:404 (*al-qaḍāyā al-badīhiyya wa-l-maʿārif al-fiṭriyya*); 8:314 (*al-ṭuruq al-fiṭriyya al-ʿaqliyya al-sharʿiyya al-qarība al-ṣaḥīḥa*); 8:530 (*al-maʿārif al-awwaliyya al-fiṭriyya*); 7:425 (*irādāt fiṭriyya wa-ʿulūm fiṭriyya*); 4:213 (*ḥukm al-fiṭra awwalī badīhī*); 6:112 (*fiṭar al-nās*); 7:403, 8:463 (*al-fiṭra al-insāniyya*); 7:25: looking upwards when supplicating as *fiṭrī ʿaqlī*; 8:38: human beings *mafṭūrūn* to recognize the existence of the Creator.

[101] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 3:70 (*al-fiṭra al-ḍarūriyya*); 3:317 (*al-ʿulūm al-ḍarūriyya al-fiṭriyya*); 3:288 (*al-ʿulūm al-badīhiyya al-ḍarūriyya al-fiṭriyya*); 6:14 (*al-qaḍāyā al-fiṭriyya al-ḍarūriyya*); 7:133 (*al-umūr al-fiṭriyya al-ḍarūriyya*); 8:489 (*ʿulūm fiṭriyya ḍarūriyya*); 3:309, 6:184 (*muqaddimāt fiṭriyya ḍarūriyya*); 6:72, 9:122: knowledge of God *fiṭriyya ḍarūriyya*; 3:87 (and similar at 8:348): rational proofs for the existence of God intuitive and necessary (*fiṭriyya ḍarūriyya*); 6:272: false doctrines to which a person has been habituated "contradict his *fiṭra* and what he knows of necessity" (*tunāqiḍu fiṭratahu wa-ḍarūriyyatahu*); 8:12 ff.: knowledge of religious matters *fiṭrī-ḍarūrī* vs. *naẓarī*; 5:312–313 (*al-fiṭra allatī faṭara Allāh ʿalayhā ʿibādahu wa-l-ʿulūm al-ḍarūriyya allatī jaʿalahā fī qulūbihim*).

[102] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 1:289, 5:136–137, 5:324, 6:123, and 8:181 for the law of non-contradiction (*al-jamʿ bayna al-naqīḍayn*) and the law of the excluded middle (*rafʿ al-naqīḍayn / al-khuluww ʿan al-naqīḍayn*) together and *Darʾ*, 3:208–209, 3:224–226, 4:197, and 9:358 for the law of non-contradiction alone. See, further, *Darʾ*, 4:144: even the essential difference between God and creation reduces to an issue of the law of non-contradiction; 9:117–119: Ibn Sīnā's notion of the "eternal contingent" (*al-mumkin al-qadīm*) violates the law of non-contradiction; 6:176: the position of those who negate the divine attributes (*al-nufāh*) entails a violation of the law of the excluded middle; 3:362: the law of the excluded middle is "*min aẓhar al-umūr al-mumtaniʿa fī badīhat al-ʿaql*"; 4:290: arguments of the opponent

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are weak and entail a violation of both laws; and, finally, 6:129–130 and 6:134 for the law of the excluded middle specifically with respect to the divine attributes.

[103] This contrasts with Wael Hallaq's conclusion that Ibn Taymiyya recognizes no a priori knowledge whatsoever and that all knowledge is ultimately derived from sense perception. See Hallaq, "Existence of God," 61–63 (esp. 62, n. 66) and Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xxx–xxxii. Von Kügelgen ("Poison of Philosophy," 327) has shown that Ibn Taymiyya does accept the external existence of universals (at least in some domains); she concludes that "this adherence to 'moderate realism' stands in sharp contrast to his [Ibn Taymiyya's] nominalistic attitude of denying any extramental existence of universals whatsoever in the course of his direct rejection of the real definition and the rules of syllogistic logic." For her larger discussion of Ibn Taymiyya as a "moderate realist" rather than a strict nominalist, see von Kügelgen, 306–312.

[104] "*ʿilm ḍarūrī yaqīnī awwalī lā yatawaqqafu ʿalā al-naẓar wa-l-istidlāl wa-lā yatawaqqafu ʿalā al-burhān bal huwa muqaddimāt al-burhān wa-uṣūluhu allatī yubnā ʿalayhā al-burhān*." *Darʾ*, 3:317, lines 16–17.

[105] "*aẓhar al-umūr al-mumtaniʿa fī badīhat al-ʿaql*." *Darʾ*, 3:362, line 14.

[106] *Darʾ*, 3:309, lines 15–16. See also *Darʾ*, 6:276, lines 17–18, where Ibn Taymiyya speaks of "*al-qaḍāyā al-mubtadaʾa fī al-nafs*."

with the term *awwalī* (initial) constitutes, to my mind, persuasive evidence that he considers such logical universals to be truly a priori—particularly in light of the latter part of the phrase, where he states that God "*yabtadiʾ*" this knowledge in the mind. This, it seems, could only mean that God places this knowledge in the mind ab initio ("*ibtidāʾan*"), in other words, that He *initiates* this knowledge in the mind, prior to and independently of the mind's subsequent empirical encounter with the world.

Yet Ibn Taymiyya seems to contradict this conclusion (namely, that the mind possesses certain knowledge in an a priori fashion) in another passage, where he states that judgements (*al-qaḍāʾ bi-anna*) such as that black and white are contraries (*yataḍāddān*), or that motion and rest are contradictory (*yatanāqaḍān*), or that a body cannot be in two places at one and the same time are akin to "all universal propositions that [, which?] originate in sense perception (*ḥiss*)."[107] Granted, the Arabic phraseology here is ambiguous, and we cannot be altogether sure whether the relative pronoun *allatī* ("that/which") is meant restrictively, in the sense of "are like all universal propositions that originate in sense perception" (to the exclusion of those universal propositions that do not originate in sense perception), or non-restrictively, in the sense of "are like all universal propositions, which originate in sense perception" (i.e., as all universal propositions do). In another passage, however, Ibn Taymiyya cites propositions of an even more abstract nature than the foregoing, such as the proposition that any existent thing is either necessary or contingent, eternal or temporal, self-standing (*qāʾim bi-nafsihi*) or subsistent in another (*qāʾim bi-ghayrihi*), or the proposition that any two existent things either are contemporaneous with each other or exist at different times, are either distinct (*mubāyin*) from each other or co-located (*muḥāyith*).[108] In commenting on propositions of this nature, Ibn Taymiyya states explicitly that "if we formulate in our minds a universal judgement applicable to all external existents or to all mental notions, such as [the propositions listed], our knowledge of these universal, generally applicable propositions is mediated by what we know of external existents."[109] On the basis of this statement, it would seem that all universal notions—even logical ones—are, for Ibn Taymiyya, ultimately abstracted from sense data. Yet

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[107] "*ka-sāʾir al-qaḍāyā al-kulliyya allatī mabādiʾuhā min al-ḥiss*." See *Darʾ*, 6:88, lines 9–12. See also the more general discussion at *Darʾ*, 6:88–89. On the difference between contrariety (*taḍādd*) and contradiction (*tanāquḍ*), see Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics*, 213.

[108] See *Darʾ*, 6:127, lines 2–5.

[109] "*idhā ḥakamnā bi-ʿuqūlinā ḥukman kulliyyan yaʿummu al-mawjūdāt aw yaʿummu al-maʿlūmāt mithl qawlinā … kāna ʿilmunā bi-hādhihi al-qaḍāyā al-kulliyya al-ʿāmma bi-tawassuṭ mā ʿalimnāhu min al-mawjūdāt*." *Darʾ*, 6:127, lines 1–2 and 7–8.

Ibn Taymiyya is adamant that such logical propositions are necessary (*ḍarūrī*), innate (*fiṭrī*), and self-evident (*badīhī*)—terms he never applies to the natural universals (*al-kulliyyāt al-ṭabīʿiyya*) that correspond to the various species and that are abstracted by the mind from the instantiated individuals of a given class of objects.

How, then, can this apparent contradiction be resolved? The answer seems to be that what is derived from the particulars is the *specific content* of the propositions mentioned—that black and white, for example, or motion and rest are opposites, that either a thing is self-standing or it subsists in something else (as an accident does), and so forth. What is logically necessary and therefore a priori, however, is the universal *relational judgement* that two opposites, whatever they may be, cannot co-exist or cannot qualify one and the same entity simultaneously (or any other such derivative formulation of the law of non-contradiction). In other words, it is the abstract law itself that is a priori for Ibn Taymiyya, it would seem, but not the specific, particularized instances in the world to which the law applies. The knowledge that, for example, black and white, as opposed to red and green, are opposites is not logically necessary and can therefore only be discovered from our observation of the particular colors that pigment our empirical reality. What is logically necessary—and, it would seem, both self-evident (*badīhī*) and a priori (*awwalī*) for Ibn Taymiyya—is the judgement that any two colors (or anything else) that are opposites are necessarily subject to the law of non-contradiction. In other words, what the mind knows in an a priori manner is the universal logical rule (as can be stated in universal terms) that for every x and y where x and y are opposites, x and y cannot co-exist (or qualify one and the same entity simultaneously). This is the universal logical rule that is known a priori and that holds in all possible worlds. The fact that in the contingencies of our particular world, x happens to be white (and not red) and y happens to be black (and not green) is, once more, something we can only come to know on the basis of what we observe in the world around us by means of our sense perception.

In sum, the built-in, a priori knowledge of the mind—which Ibn Taymiyya also refers to as being innate (*fiṭrī*) and necessary (*ḍarūrī*)—is the knowledge of necessary logical relations and abstract principles (such as the law of the excluded middle) that would apply to any thing or things in the event that they should exist. Yet our knowledge of what actually does exist can never be derived from abstract reason[110] but can only be gained through sensation (as well as true reports). The legitimate judgements of reason, therefore, are invariably cognitional (*ʿilmī*),[111] notional (*iʿtibārī*),[112] and relational (*nisbī*), never existential (*wujūdī*). Reason can never establish the factual existence of anything (other than God), but once it has been provided with the knowledge of extant particular realities through either sensation or true reports, it can and does formulate logical judgements (*aḥkām*) concerning these existent realities in accordance with the abstract logical principles that are embedded in it in an a priori manner. This particular function of the mind, though seemingly too obvious to warrant mention, is, in reality, an eminently important function for Ibn Taymiyya, as it lies at the very basis of all thought and the construction of all knowledge. In fact, Ibn Taymiyya relies extensively on the everyday, obvious, innate principles of the mind in the course of his argumentation against the philosophers and the *mutakallimūn*. That is, he often seeks to refute their doctrines on the grounds that, when taken to their logical conclusion, such doctrines end up contradicting one or more of these basic, axiomatic rules of thought and can therefore be known, by virtue of pure reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*), to be necessarily invalid (*fāsid*) and false (*bāṭil*).

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[110] With the sole exception of God, but then this is not really an exception at all, for the rational inference that leads from the fact of the temporal origination of the world (*ḥudūth*

Thus far, we have become acquainted with two main functions of reason: (1) to universalize the particulars of the empirical realm and (2) to apply the innate rules of logic in order to pass judgements on how extant particulars must, logically speaking, relate to one another. We have also seen that the innate logical knowledge embedded in the mind in an a priori fashion is alternately referred to by Ibn Taymiyya as being *badīhī* (self-evident), *fiṭrī* (innate), or *ḍarūrī* (necessary). When applied to the kind of a priori knowledge discussed above, these three terms are basically equivalent and interchangeable. Yet neither the concept of what is innate (*fiṭra*) nor the concept of necessity (*ḍarūra*) is simply reducible to self-evident axioms (the *badīhiyyāt*). In other words, while that

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al-ʿālam) to the conclusion that God must necessarily exist is, ultimately, based on the *rational* consideration that a non-necessary and contingent world—such as we know ours to be through our *empirical* experience of it—can be coherently accounted for only by positing the existence of a necessary, all-powerful, transcendent Creator in order to avoid an infinite regress of causes (the impossibility of which Ibn Taymiyya holds to be known by *logical* necessity). From this perspective, the rational inference of the existence of God can thus be seen as one more instance in which reason applies its innate and incontrovertible logical principles (in this case, the impossibility of an infinite causal regress) to the existential data about our contingent and non-necessary world that have been mediated to it through our senses.

[111] At, e.g., *Darʾ*, 5:91, 5:138, 10:52, 10:53, 10:66, 10:107, and 10:122. See also *Darʾ*, 5:102 (*ʿilmī dhihnī*) and 5:118 (*dhihnī ʿilmī*).

[112] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 3:20 (*iʿtibārī lafẓī*) and 9:114 (*lafẓī iʿtibārī*), 3:207 (*nisbī iʿtibārī*), 3:326 (*dhihnī iʿtibārī*), and 5:141, 5:144 (*ʿaqlī iʿtibārī*).

which is innate and that which is necessary both overlap with the a priori, each also comprises further elements that distinguish it from the other as well as from the self-evident axioms embedded in the mind. In the following two sections, we examine each of these cognitive principles, *fiṭra* and necessity, in turn.

4.2 **Fiṭra***: The Original Normative Disposition*

Ibn Taymiyya's conception of the *fiṭra* is a subtle one that is perhaps best rendered by the term "original normative disposition."[113] The term *fiṭra* as it appears in Ibn Taymiyya's thought has been translated in various ways, most often by terms such as "nature" or "constitution," often qualified as being in some sense innate ("natural," "inner," "inborn," etc.).[114] Now, while the *fiṭra* for Ibn Taymiyya is doubtless innate, this term does not fully capture—or at least does not underscore to the appropriate degree—the strong sense of normativity, both moral and cognitive, that Ibn Taymiyya accords to this "innate disposition." This *fiṭrī* disposition, in turn, derives its normativity, to a substantial degree, from the fact of its "originality," that is, from the fact that the *fiṭra* is that which is "there first,"[115] that which is originally present (at least *in*

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[113] Ibn Taymiyya deals with the question of the *fiṭra* extensively at *Darʾ*, 8:359–535, as well as in his "Risāla fī al-kalām ʿalā al-fiṭra" (in *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil al-kubrā*, 2:332–349) and *al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn*, 420–432. Ibn Taymiyya's notion of *fiṭra* has been discussed in a number of previous studies. See, for instance, Holtzman, "Human Choice"; Kazi, "Reconciling Reason and Revelation," 207–313 (esp. 250–292 and 309–313); Gobillot, "L'épître du discours sur la *fiṭra*"; and Vasalou, *Theological Ethics*, 56–105. See also Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 39–44 on the relationship between *fiṭra* and *ʿaql* and on the *fiṭra* as a religious faculty; Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community*, 215–265, esp. at 215–227 for the role of the *fiṭra* as an alternative foundation for Ibn Taymiyya's epistemology; and von Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 299 ff. and von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik," 192–199 (esp. at 194–198) on the epistemological function of the *fiṭra* more generally. On the role of the *fiṭra* in coming to know the existence of God, see Hallaq, "Existence of God," 55–66 and Özervarli, "Divine Wisdom," 37–60. See also, on the *fiṭra* more generally, Gobillot, *La fitra* and Adang, "Islam as the Inborn Religion of Mankind."

[114] See, e.g., Hoover: "natural constitution" (*Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 39); Özervarli: "inner nature" ("Qurʾānic Rational Theology," 91) and "human nature" (Özervarli, "Divine Wisdom," 38, 45, and *passim*); Hallaq: "innate intelligence" (*Greek Logicians*, xl), "natural intelligence" (*Greek Logicians*, 27), "faculty of natural intelligence" (*Greek Logicians*, 167, n. 1), "sound disposition" (*Greek Logicians*, 110), "instincts" (*Greek Logicians*, 163, translating "*fiṭar*"); von Kügelgen: "inborn intelligence" ("Poison of Philosophy," 298) and "angeborene Intelligenz des Menschen" (von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik," 195, as a gloss for "*ʿaql*, *fiṭra* oder *ġarīza*"). See Holtzman, "Human Choice," 184, n. 11 for various other translations found in the secondary literature, the diversity of which she cites as an indication of "the complexity of the term *fiṭra*" (Holtzman, 184, n. 11). Holtzman herself leaves the term untranslated.

[115] The root *f-ṭ-r* in its most basic sense denotes splitting, cleaving, or breaking apart (hence

potentia) in a person's constitution and which is ultimately determinative of what a human being is (or ought to be).[116] Ibn Taymiyya derives this normative understanding of the original *fiṭra* in part from the famous prophetic *ḥadīth* that states that "every child is born on [i.e., in a state of] the *fiṭra*" (understood here as pure monotheism) and is only subsequently diverted by his parents (or surrounding milieu) from this original potential to various forms of religion that represent a departure from the innate monotheism moored in the *fiṭra*.[117] The fact that the *fiṭra* is a morally normative concept and does not include just any of the various appetites, drives, and inclinations often thought of as "natural" in a human being is illustrated by the incident in which the angel Gabriel, on the occasion of the Night Journey (*isrāʾ*) to Jerusalem, presented the Prophet with a vessel of milk and a vessel of wine, then bade him choose between the two. When the Prophet instinctively inclined to the milk over the wine, Gabriel responded, "You have chosen the *fiṭra*, and had you chosen the

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fuṭūr/faṭūr, "breakfast," and *fiṭr/ifṭār*, "breaking one's fast"). It also signifies making, creating, fashioning, or bringing into being, with the associated connotation of origination (and perhaps, by extension, of originality). Derivatives of *f-ṭ-r* occur twenty times in the Qurʾān: five times with the meaning of cleaving or sundering and thirteen times with the meaning of creating, fashioning, or bringing into existence. The word *fiṭra* itself, denoting something like "original disposition" or "primordial created state," occurs in a single verse, in conjunction with the verb *faṭara*, which has the sense of creating or originating. The verse in question, Q. *al-Rūm* 30:30, reads: "So set thy face to the religion as a *ḥanīf*, [in] the primordial nature from God upon which He originated mankind (*fiṭrat Allāhi llatī faṭara l-nāsa ʿalayhā*)—there is no altering the creation of God; that is the upright religion, but most men know not" (trans. *The Study Quran*, with modifications).

[116] Özervarli notes, in a similar vein, that a person's *fiṭra* "consists of his or her *original* and distinctive qualities that would direct activities if left unaffected by his or her family or social environment" (emphasis mine). Özervarli, "Divine Wisdom," 47.

[117] The *ḥadīth* in question reads: "Every child is born on [i.e., in a state of] the *fiṭra*, then his parents turn him into a Jew or a Christian—just as camels are reproduced from a whole [and sound] animal: do you find any among them that are maimed?" Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwaṭṭaʾ*, 241. Nearly identical wording is found in Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 7:97 and similar in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 334, with the addition of "or they turn him into a Magian." Slightly different wording is reported in Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1157–1158 and al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 327–328, 1199. Muslim (*Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1158) reports an alternative version with the wording "born on the creed/religion (*ʿalā al-milla*)," as well as two further versions (at Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1158)—"born on this creed/religion" and "on this *fiṭra*"—both containing the additional phrase "until his tongue [is able to] express it (*yubayyina/yuʿabbira ʿanhu*) [his true belief?]." Finally, al-Bukhārī reports a version of the *ḥadīth* that more explicitly underscores the role played by the parents in changing the original disposition/*fiṭra* with which the child is born: "There is no child born except that he is born on the *fiṭra*, then his parents make him into a Jew or a Christian—just as you breed animals: do you find any among them that are maimed *until you go and maim them* (*ḥattā takūnū antum tajdaʿūnahā*)?" Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1636.

wine, your community (*umma*) would have gone astray."[118] That human beings originally enter the world in a pure state is, finally, explicitly affirmed by the Qurʾān itself, where we read, "Verily, We created man in the best of molds"[119]—a state that, if subsequently lost ("then did We abase him [to be] the lowest of the low"),[120] we can only regain by the sincere practice of ethical monotheism through belief in and full submission to God ("except such as believe and work righteous deeds, for they shall have a reward unstinting").[121]

While it is neither possible nor directly relevant to our immediate concerns to provide here a full account of Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of the *fiṭra*,[122] we may note that, in terms of its relevance to the question of reason (*ʿaql*) and rational inference (*naẓar*), Ibn Taymiyya describes "sound *fiṭra*" (*al-fiṭra al-salīma*) as the (intuitive) faculty by which one judges the soundness of premises and the arguments based on them.[123] Further, Ibn Taymiyya maintains that God has "made the *fiṭra* of people disposed to the apprehension and cognition of the realities [of things]"—by means, it would seem, of a healthy and functioning intuitive capacity. He speaks, instructively, of "*ʿuqūl banī Ādam allatī faṭarahum Allāh ʿalayhā*" (the intellects of mankind upon which God has originated them),[124] which is reminiscent of Q. *al-Rūm* 30:30: "the primordial nature from God upon which He originated mankind" (*fiṭrat Allāhi llatī faṭara l-nāsa ʿalayhā*). God is said to have *faṭara* (created, fashioned) the *ʿuqūl* (minds, intellects) of mankind in a particular manner, a statement that makes it quite evident that the *fiṭra*, for Ibn Taymiyya, closely overlaps with what we might call innate or intuitive knowledge and, fundamentally, with reason (*ʿaql*) itself.[125] Indeed, he tells us, "were it not for this disposition [or capacity] of people's hearts/minds to apprehend these realities, there would be no discursive reasoning or rational inference, nor even any possibility of discourse or speech."[126] Ibn Taymiyya draws a parallel between this disposition of the *fiṭra* to recognize rational and inferential truths and the disposition of the body to receive and benefit from nourishment through food and drink. Just as the body is endowed with an innate capacity to distinguish—"intuitively," as it were, and with no reflection—between healthful and noxious foods, so does there exist in the heart/mind (*fī al-qulūb*) an even greater capacity to distinguish—again, intuitively and without reflection—what is true from what is false.[127]

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[118] "*hudīta al-fiṭra* (*aw aṣabta al-fiṭra*) *a-mā law annaka akhadhta al-khamr ghawat ummatuka*." Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 852; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 87; al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, 5:201–202. Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 838 has "*akhadhta al-fiṭra*," while Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 82 has "*ikhtarta al-fiṭra*" and does not include the phrase "had you chosen the wine, your community would have gone astray."

[119] "*la-qad khalaqnā l-insāna fī aḥsani taqwīm*" (Q. *al-Tīn* 95:4).

[120] Q. *al-Tīn* 95:5.

[121] Q. *al-Tīn* 95:6.

[122] See p. 260, n. 113 above and p. 262, n. 125 (here below) for a full listing of relevant discussions on the *fiṭra*, both in Ibn Taymiyya and more generally.

[123] See, for example, *Darʾ*, 7:37, lines 17–19.

[124] *Darʾ*, 7:38, line 5.

[125] Notwithstanding, Ibn Taymiyya's conception of the *fiṭra* goes beyond cognitive faculties narrowly defined to include an important spiritual and ethical dimension, as discussed by, for instance, Holtzman, "Human Choice," *passim*; Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 39–44; Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community*, 223–227; and Vasalou, *Theological Ethics*, 65–92.

The *fiṭra*, however, can only perform this intuitive function successfully as long as it is not undermined or rendered inoperable by being tampered with, perverted, or otherwise deflected from its natural function. Such deformations of the *fiṭra* with respect to reason (*ʿaql*) and rational inference (*naẓar*) can occur, for example, when the intuitive judgements of native sound reason are overridden by unfounded parochial doctrines. As a person becomes habituated to such modes of thinking over time, they become second nature to him and, eventually, distort or displace the sound judgements of his original normative disposition. For Ibn Taymiyya, the standard point of reference concerning "innate, necessary propositions" (*qaḍāyā fiṭriyya ḍarūriyya*) is "those who possess a sound *fiṭra* that has not been changed on account of inherited beliefs or preconceived biases [stubbornly clung to]."[128] He also refers to "those who have not suffered a change in their innate disposition (*fiṭra*) as a result of conjecture (*ẓann*) or preconceived bias (*hawā*)."[129] In another place, he mentions the presence of a *shubha* (doubt or confusion caused by specious objections or counterarguments; pl. *shubuhāt*, *shubah*). He then comments, with regard to the denial of God's being above creation (*ʿuluww*) and His being distinct and separate from it (*mubāyana*), that no one concedes such a denial to the negationists (*nufāh*) by dint of his *fiṭra* (*bi-fiṭratihi*) once the proposition has been properly understood.[130] Rather, such a concession can only come about through the prolonged presence of doubt or confusion in the mind caused by a specious objection (*shubha*), especially if the person in question is also subject to the vagaries of whim and preconceived bias (*hawā*) or has some ulterior motive or personal interest (*gharaḍ*) in denying the truth.[131] With the introduction of ulterior motive—paired here with whim or obstinate personal opinion (*hawā*)—in addition to (blind) imitation (*taqlīd*) and (unreflective) habit (*ʿāda*), Ibn Taymiyya identifies a total of seven basic motives, some cognitive and some moral, for suppressing the normative *fiṭra*. These "seven deadly sins" of the *fiṭra* by which a person can undermine his own innate, normative disposition are (1) accepting (unexamined) inherited beliefs (*iʿtiqādāt mawrūtha*); (2) following whims, preconceived biases, or stubbornly clinging to personal opinion in the face of countervailing evidence (*hawā*); (3) engaging in conjecture (*ẓann*); (4) entertaining doubts or confusions caused by specious objections (*shubuhāt*); (5) harboring ulterior motives or personal interests (*gharaḍ*); (6) following habit (*ʿāda*) blindly without reflection; and (7) engaging in blind imitation (*taqlīd*).[132] If the *fiṭra* is to perform its vital cognitive functions properly, it must constantly be guarded from succumbing to these infirmities.

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[126] *Darʾ*, 5:62, lines 9–11 (*wa-jaʿala fiṭar ʿibādihi mustaʿidda li-idrāk al-ḥaqāʾiq wa-maʿrifatihā wa-law lā mā fī al-qulūb min al-istiʿdād li-maʿrifat al-ḥaqāʾiq lam yakun al-naẓar wa-l-istidlāl wa-lā al-khiṭāb wa-l-kalām*). See also, e.g., *Darʾ*, 8:41, lines 2–3, where Ibn Taymiyya makes the similar point that "[people's] hearts/minds have been fashioned (*mafṭūra*) such that [certain] realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*) become manifest to them, [realities] that they have an [innate] capacity to receive" (*wa-l-qulūb mafṭūra ʿalā an yatajallā lahā min al-ḥaqāʾiq mā hiya mustaʿidda li-tajallīhā fīhā*).

[127] *Darʾ*, 5:62, lines 10–15. See also Hallaq, "Existence of God," 55.

[128] "*ahl al-fiṭar al-salīma allatī lam tataghayyar fiṭratuhā bi-l-iʿtiqādāt al-mawrūtha wa-l-ahwāʾ*." *Darʾ*, 6:14, lines 7–8.

[129] *Darʾ*, 6:14, lines 9–10 (*alladhīna lam yaḥṣul mā yughayyiru fiṭratahum min ẓann aw hawā*).

[130] See *Darʾ*, 6:271, lines 11–13.

4.3 Ḍarūra (*Necessity*)

We have seen that, with respect to Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of the innate, a priori logical principles embedded in the mind ab initio, the terms *badīhī* (self-evident, axiomatic), *fiṭrī* (innate, inborn), and *ḍarūrī* (necessary, immediate) are basically equivalent. Yet just as the *fiṭra* comprises dimensions that go beyond a priori logical axioms, so too is Ibn Taymiyya's conception of *ḍarūra*, or necessity, not simply reducible to primary axioms (*badīhiyyāt*). While all a priori and axiomatic principles count, naturally, as necessary knowledge, Ibn Taymiyya identifies at least three other types of necessary knowledge apart from these. First, he speaks of an "empirical necessity" or "sensory necessity" (*ḍarūra ḥissiyya*),[133] by which he simply means to affirm that our external senses (provided they are not impaired) yield necessary knowledge of the particulars we perceive through them, such that our sensory knowledge of the world is obvious, unreflective, and indubitable and can only be denied through sophistry.[134] Second, he mentions what we may call "linguistic necessity” or “linguistically necessary knowledge,” which is presumably based on a native speaker’s perfect familiarity with the precise linguistic conventions of his speech community (a topic we examined at length in chapter 4). Ibn Taymiyya alludes to this notion of linguistic necessity when, for example, he prefaces an argument he is making on the basis of the known meaning of a given word with the phrase “we know of necessity based on the language of the Arabs (*naʿlamu bi-l-iḍṭirār min lughat al-ʿArab*) that …”[135] Elsewhere he makes a similar appeal to linguistic necessity when he asserts that knowledge of the difference between a quality or attribute (*ṣifa*) and the entity qualified by it (*mawṣūf*) is “anchored in the innate nature of the mind and the languages of various nations” (*mustaqirr fī fiṭar al-ʿuqūl wa-lughāt al-umam*).[136] Here he underscores the fact that innate, necessary knowledge lodged in the mind is also, at least in some cases, reflected in certain universal linguistic conventions shared across nations and peoples. Third, Ibn Taymiyya admits as necessary knowledge the result of any valid process of rational inference that starts from necessarily true premises, a process he refers to as *naẓar ḥasan* or *ḥusn al-naẓar*.[137] If the premises are necessary and the induction itself proceeds from premises to conclusion in a valid manner, then the resultant knowledge, once the rational faculty has carried out this inferential process, impresses itself on the mind as a necessary and undeniable conclusion. As Ibn Taymiyya puts it,

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[131] "*innamā yuwāfiquhum ʿalayhi man qāmat ʿindahu shubha min shubah al-nufāh lā siyyamā in kāna lahu hawā aw gharaḍ.*" *Darʾ*, 6:271, lines 13–15.

[132] For more on the suppression of the *fiṭra* through these various motives and mechanisms, see *Darʾ*, 6:271–272.

[133] See *Darʾ*, 3:317, lines 11–12, where he mentions "*ʿulūm*[*ihi*] *al-ḥissiyya al-ḍarūriyya.*"

[134] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 3:428 (*min aʿẓam al-mukābara wa-l-safsaṭa wa-l-buhtān*); 9:248 (*mukābara*

> Even [with respect to] knowledge that is acquired (*muktasab*) and that comes about [for a person] through discursive reasoning (*naẓar*), [that person] ultimately finds himself compelled to [accept] it (*muḍṭarr ilayhi*) of necessity, for the knowing subject, once knowledge has come about in his mind—either with or without an inferential proof or argument (*dalīl*)—is unable to repel that knowledge from his mind.[138]

In this manner, even knowledge that is acquired through inference can, under the right conditions, count as necessary, and hence certain, knowledge.

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bayyina); 4:172, 5:196 (*mukābara lil-ḥiss*); 3:363, 4:192 (*mukābara lil-ḥiss wa-l-ʿaql*); 5:41 (*mukābara lil-ḍarūra*); 9:207 (*al-muʿānada wa-l-jaḥd*); 1:182, 1:185, 7:404, 8:219, and numerous others (*al-safsaṭa*); 9:268 (*al-muʿānada wa-l-safsaṭa*).

[135] *Darʾ*, 7:113, line 19.

[136] *Darʾ*, 1:286, lines 5–6.

[137] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 3:261, line 15.

[138] “*wa-in kāna al-ʿilm alladhī ḥaṣala bi-iktisābihi wa-naẓarihi huwa muḍṭarr ilayhi fī ākhir al-amr, fa-lā yumkinu al-ʿālim al-ʿārif baʿda ḥuṣūl al-maʿrifa fī qalbihi bi-dalīl aw bi-ghayr dalīl an yadfaʿa dhālika ʿan qalbihi.*” *Darʾ*, 9:28, line 19 to 9:29, line 3.

In addition to necessary knowledge derived from the quaternity of (1) a priori intuitions/self-evident axioms, (2) sensation, (3) linguistic convention, and (4) valid rational inference, there is a fifth major source of necessary knowledge, namely, *tawātur*, which I have previously translated as "recurrent mass transmission." We have already encountered the concept and epistemic function of *tawātur* with respect to transmitted reports, our second main source of factual knowledge about the world after sensation. As noted in that section,[139] all our knowledge about anything that is absent (*ghāʾib*) (defined as that which is not available to our senses right now) ultimately comes to us by way of reports. As we have seen, this holds true for any (non-religious) knowledge we may have of past events or of places we have never visited, as well as, naturally, (religious) knowledge of the unseen realm proper, that realm which is conventionally veiled from human sense perception in this world. We saw that Ibn Taymiyya, in accord with the mainstream tradition, accepts as true reports (*khabar ṣādiq*) the entire text of the Qurʾān, as well as any *ḥadīth* that has reached us through an authentic chain of transmission (*isnād ṣaḥīḥ*) as determined by conventional Muslim *ḥadīth* scholarship. Yet we have also seen that even in the case of *ḥadīth* reports, we can only claim absolute certainty of the content they convey if the *ḥadīth* in question was transmitted through *tawātur* (even if only *tawātur maʿnawī*, that is, recurrent mass transmission of a common meaning, or theme, with differences in the exact wording). Regarding instances of transmission external to the *ḥadīth* tradition, be they historical or otherwise, it is likewise *tawātur* alone that can guarantee ultimate authenticity. The certainty afforded to us by *tawātur* with respect to reports entails that at the moment such reports come to be experienced as *mutawātir* by a knowing subject, the content of those reports becomes necessary knowledge for that person. In fact, *tawātur* itself is often defined as that (generally unspecifiable) number of reports that is necessary and sufficient to engender in the heart/mind of the knower a firm conviction (*iʿtiqād jāzim*)[140] that the content reported is definitively true. It is in this sense that *tawātur* is, for Ibn Taymiyya, one of the fundamental sources of necessary knowledge. In this, he follows faithfully in the tradition of Islamic jurisprudence and its discourse on the integrity of Muslim textual transmission, especially that of *ḥadīth*.

At this juncture, however, Ibn Taymiyya surprises us with the insight—seemingly unique to him—that the underlying logic of *tawātur* is, in fact, operable on a scale much wider than the domain of *ikhbār*, or reporting, to which it has conventionally been confined. Applying the concept of mass transmission beyond the domain of texts (as discussed in legal theory) or the transmission of more general historical and geographical knowledge (as theorized by the *mutakallimūn*), Ibn Taymiyya calls the notion of *tawātur* into service as the final guarantor of authenticity for practically all the other sources and avenues of knowledge in his epistemological panoply that we have investigated over the course of this chapter, including the self-evident axioms of reason, the normative *fiṭra*, and even sense perception itself. We examine the most important of these applications of the principle of *tawātur* in the following section.

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[139] See p. 237 ff. above.

[140] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 7:422, line 1, among others.

4.4 Tawātur *as the Final Epistemic Guarantor*

In a seemingly unprecedented move, Ibn Taymiyya takes the principle of *tawātur*—well known primarily as the final guarantor of the authenticity of the Qurʾānic text and a limited number of *ḥadīth* reports—and extends it dramatically, making it the guarantor of his entire epistemic system.[141] Although the category known as *ḥadīth* reports can and does contain errors in the form of falsified *ḥadīth*,[142] we can, according to Ibn Taymiyya's theory, nevertheless have certain knowledge (*yaqīn*) of a *ḥadīth*'s authenticity if it has been transmitted through *tawātur*—defined as the transmission of a text, from its origin and at every subsequent stage, by disparate sources in such numbers as to preclude the possibility that the report in question could have been forged through collusion or conscious agreement (*tawāṭuʾ*). Admittedly, empirical and a priori rational knowledge differ from *mutawātir* reports in that they are immediate and impose themselves on the mind directly with no need for confirmation through corroboratory reports. Thus, when we say that the principle of *tawātur*, for Ibn Taymiyya, applies to sensory knowledge and to the axiomatic principles of reason, we must not understand him to be saying that our certainty of such knowledge is *dependent* on *tawātur* in the manner in which our certainty of the content of transmitted reports depends on *tawātur*.[143] We are certainly justified in claiming empirical knowledge of what we ourselves experience empirically without waiting for such knowledge to be confirmed for us by the rest of mankind. Similarly, the intuitive a priori maxims lodged in the mind impose themselves as true on each individual mind directly and not through the *mutawātir* accumulation of corroborative reports that other minds have likewise recognized them as true. An abandoned child growing up alone on a deserted island—such as a Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān, for instance[144]—would certainly still have access to both empirical and rational certitude. Ibn Taymiyya's point, rather, is that in the event that such necessary knowledge should somehow fall prey to skepticism or doubt on account of some cognitive impediment, then a sort of *tawātur* of the human *fiṭra* as a whole must be summoned to witness as a corrective.[145] Such doubt, for Ibn Taymiyya, may be induced by a number of factors. Primary among these is the prolonged exposure to specious philosophical or theological doctrines built upon dubious, often highly recondite arguments whose conclusions eventually entail a negation or contradiction of what is ultimately known to be true by necessity. We may illustrate Ibn Taymiyya's appeal to *tawātur* in such cases by way of the following theological example.

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[141] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 5:319, line 19 to 5:320, line 6, where we read of what amounts to a kind of "*tawātur ʿaqlī*" (specifically of the early community with regard to their affirmation of the divine attributes), as well as *Darʾ*, 6:284, lines 19–20 for what amounts to a kind of "*tawātur fiṭrī*" where Ibn Taymiyya speaks of "*ṭawāʾif mutafarriqūna ittafaqū ʿalā dhālika min ghayr muwāṭaʾa wa-dhālika yaqtaḍī annahum ṣādiqūna fīmā yukhbirūna bihi ʿan fiṭarihim*" (that is, they agreed in, essentially, a *mutawātir* fashion on the basis of a sound, universally shared human *fiṭra*) and 8:43–45 for *tawātur fiṭrī* more generally (with interesting analogies at 8:43). See also *Darʾ*, 6:12, line 19 to 6:13, line 1 ("*al-khaṭaʾ ʿalā al-jamʿ al-kathīr mumtaniʿ fī al-umūr al-ḥissiyya wa-l-ḍarūriyya*") and 6:13, lines 9–10 ("*thabata anna hādhihi al-muqaddima badīhiyya li-annahu ittafaqa ʿalayhā umam kathīra bi-dūn al-tawāṭuʾ*," that is, in a *mutawātir* fashion).

[142] Or so-called "*mawḍūʿāt*," on which see Brown, *Hadith*, 69–77. On the genre of *mawḍūʿāt* works, or compilations of *ḥadīth* forgeries, see Brown, 99–100.

In his theological treatise *al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*,[146] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī asserts the well-known Ashʿarī doctrine that God is neither spatially located (*fī jiha*) nor in a place (*makān*). According to the Ashʿarī view, this entails the corollary that He also cannot be said to interpenetrate (*yudākhil*) or be consubstantial with (*sārī fī*) the universe nor to be distinct and separate (*mubāyin*) from it.[147] This doctrine is put forward in order to avoid the attribution of spatial location or place to God for fear of falling into corporealism (*tajsīm*), a particularly offensive species of assimilationism (*tashbīh*). Al-Rāzī reports that those who oppose this doctrine (such as the Ḥanbalīs and the Karrāmiyya in his day, and later also Ibn Taymiyya) claim, as a matter of self-evident knowledge (*ʿilm badīhī*), that for any two existing entities, *either* one must inhere in (be *sārī fī*) the other (as an accident inheres in a substance) *or* the two must be distinct and separate (*mubāyin*) from each other (as in the case of two independent substances).[148] Al-Rāzī counters the claim of self-evident knowledge in this instance with several arguments.[149] First, he argues that if the logical exhaustiveness of the stated disjunction were truly self-evident (*badīhī*), it would not have been possible for a large number of thinkers to deny it, as do, in fact, all theological schools "save the Ḥanābila and the Karrāmiyya."[150] Second, while the universal concept of man, for instance, subsumes extant individuals each occupying a portion of space (*ḥayyiz*) and possessing dimension (*miqdār*), the universal itself neither occupies space nor has any dimension. And while it is true that universal man, or man per se (*al-insān min ḥaythu huwa*), is a concept that exists only in the mind, it is nevertheless not impossible, al-Rāzī concludes, for the mind to conceive of such a thing—a fact that thus prevents the proposition of the opponent from being taken as self-evident. In a further argument, al-Rāzī holds that while the mind readily judges, for instance, that affirmation (*ithbāt*) and negation (*nafy*) are contradictory and mutually exclusive opposites, such is not the case with respect to the proposition that two extant entities must necessarily be either consubstantial or distinct from each other. In fact, it is quite possible for the mind to conceive of a third possibility, namely, that the two entities are neither consubstantial nor distinct from each other. Reason, al-Rāzī argues, is unable to form an immediate judgement concerning the possibility or impossibility of this third proposition in the absence of a conclusive argument or proof (*burhān*),[151] and this need for argument and proof means that no automatic judgement of the proposition's impossibility can be considered truly a priori or self-evident.

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[143] And *tawātur* alone, as we have seen, for although Ibn Taymiyya accepts reports that have been determined to be true or accurate (*ṣādiqa*), such as the category of *ḥadīth* reports classified as *ṣaḥīḥ*, it is nevertheless *tawātur* alone that guarantees that such transmitted knowledge is definitively certain (*yaqīnī*). This restriction of certitude to the realm of the *mutawātir* would seem to entail a considerable narrowing of the circle of certain knowledge (*ʿilm*) that is available to human beings. This apparent narrowing, however, is offset by Ibn Taymiyya's substantial broadening of the category of *mutawātir* itself in the guise of what he defines as "functionally equivalent to the *mutawātir*" (*fī maʿnā al-mutawātir*). See El-Tobgui, "From Legal Theory to *Erkenntnistheorie*," 19–21 (and *passim*).

[144] In reference to the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Ṭufayl's (d. 581/1185) famous philosophical novel of the same name. Ibn Sīnā, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, and the famous physician Ibn al-Nafīs (d. 687/1288) wrote other treatises also called *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān*. All four treatises have been published and introduced in one volume; see Yūsuf Zaydān, *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān: al-nuṣūṣ al-arbaʿa wa-mubdiʿūhā*.

[145] See, for instance, appeals to "*al-fiṭar al-salīma*" at *Darʾ*, 4:207, 5:61, 7:37 and to "*ahl al-fiṭar al-salīma*" at 6:14, lines 6–8: "*bal al-marjiʿ fī al-qaḍāyā al-fiṭriyya al-ḍarūriyya ilā ahl al-fiṭar al-salīma allatī lam tataghayyar fiṭratuhā bi-l-iʿtiqādāt al-mawrūtha wa-l-awhām*" (The reference point with respect to necessary, innate propositions is those of sound disposition whose *fiṭra* has not been altered through inherited beliefs or illusions).

[146] See al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, 1:152–164 ("al-masʾala al-thāmina: fī annahu taʿālā laysa fī makān wa-lā fī jiha"). For Ibn Taymiyya's (partial) citation of and response to this section of the *Arbaʿīn*, see *Darʾ*, 6:8–12 ff.

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[147] *Darʾ*, 6:8; al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, 1:152.

[148] With regard to an existent that is neither inside the world nor outside it, Ibn Taymiyya regards the knowledge of this impossibility as something that "people have affirmed with their *fiṭra* and know through the innate axioms and necessary knowledge [implanted in] their minds/hearts" (*aqarra bihi al-nās bi-fiṭarihim wa-ʿarafūhu bi-badāʾih ʿuqūlihim wa-ḍarūrāt qulūbihim*). *Darʾ*, 6:112, lines 10–11.

[149] See *Darʾ*, 6:9–10; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:152–155.

[150] *Darʾ*, 6:9; *Arbaʿīn*, 1:152. On the Karrāmiyya, see Zysow, "Karrāmiyya."

[151] "*Burhān*" in Ibn Taymiyya (*Darʾ*, 6:10); al-Rāzī has "*ḥujja*" instead (*Arbaʿīn*, 1:154).

In response to these arguments,[152] Ibn Taymiyya ultimately appeals to what he argues is innate, axiomatic, self-evident (*badīhī*), and therefore necessary, knowledge on the basis, essentially, of *tawātur*—the widespread transmission among human beings of common basic knowables in a way that precludes the possibility of collusion or conscious agreement (*tawāṭuʾ*) on their part. Ibn Taymiyya observes that all human beings know, in an innate (*fiṭrī*) and self-evident fashion, that of any two existing entities, it is necessarily the case either that one interpenetrates the other or that they are separate and distinct from each other. This is a straightforward case of the law of the excluded middle: given that the propositions in question are mutually exclusive and logically exhaustive, there exists no third possibility between them (the "middle" is excluded). This being the case, one or the other of the two propositions must be true; denying them both would entail a logical—and, consequently, also an ontological—impossibility, akin to holding that a thing both exists and does not exist at the same time. Such knowledge is "common to the members of all nations *whose innate nature has not been altered*."[153] Here, Ibn Taymiyya has essentially applied the theory of *tawātur* to the widespread attestations of what disparate individuals report to be innate (*fiṭrī*) or necessary (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge to them. He states explicitly that we may claim "knowledge of the factual truth (*thubūt*) of what people report in a *mutawātir* fashion with respect to empirical and necessary knowledge,"[154] with "necessary" here seemingly used in the sense of what is innate (*fiṭrī*) or self-evident (*badīhī*). Intentional mendacity (*taʿammud al-kadhib*) on the part of a large number of disparate individuals absent collusion or conscious agreement (*tawāṭuʾ*) is virtually impossible in light of the conventional workings of the world (*yamtaniʿu fī al-ʿāda*). Ibn Taymiyya further affirms that mere error (*khaṭaʾ*) is also impossible with respect to a large number in matters of both empirical and necessary (rational) knowledge,[155] for it is impossible, given the conventional workings of the world, that they should all concur fortuitously on one and the same error.

Yet if our knowledge of the law of the excluded middle is innate and self-evident (*badīhī*), it would be surprising if it could somehow be overridden, particularly by a disputed premise that is not known by necessity—in the case at hand, the contention that affirming God to be distinct and separate (*mubāyin*) from the world entails assimilationism (*tashbīh*). We recall that, for Ibn Taymiyya, the proper functioning of all our epistemic faculties—including both judging the soundness of the premises of an argument and simply retaining a meaningful awareness of the self-evident, axiomatic principles of the mind (that is, the *badīhiyyāt*)—is predicated in all cases on the health and proper functioning of the *fiṭra*. It is precisely in this sense that Ibn Taymiyya, as discussed above, conceives of the *fiṭra* as undergirding all our various cognitive and moral faculties and, when healthy, guaranteeing the veracity of their mutually corroborative witness to the truth. But as we saw above, the *fiṭra* is susceptible to both cognitive and moral corruption, the former induced by longstanding habituation to beliefs that contradict what is intuitively known to be true. In the event that the *fiṭra* has become cognitively impaired and a person insists on maintaining a doctrine that is contradictory to necessary knowledge, an appeal may be made to the *mutawātir* agreement of human beings on the point in question as conclusive proof of the veracity of the proposition. This *mutawātir* human agreement thus acts as a corrective to the erroneous doctrine that stands in opposition to it.

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[152] See *Darʾ*, 6:12–19.

[153] "*hādhā amr muttafaq ʿalayhi bayna al-umam allatī lam tughayyar fiṭratuhā*" (emphasis mine). *Darʾ*, 6:12, line 9.

[154] "*wa-bi-mithl hādhā ʿulima thubūt mā yukhbiru bihi ahl al-tawātur mimmā yuʿlamu bi-l-ḥiss wa-l-ḍarūra*." *Darʾ*, 6:12, lines 16–17.

[155] "*wa-l-khaṭaʾ ʿalā al-jamʿ al-kathīr mumtaniʿ fī al-umūr al-ḥissiyya wa-l-ḍarūriyya*." *Darʾ*, 6:12, line 19 to 6:13, line 1.

We can drive the same point home from another angle by stating the relationship between the *fiṭra* and necessary knowledge, as guaranteed through *tawātur*, in a different way. For Ibn Taymiyya, human hearts/minds and cognitive faculties (*qulūb*/*ʿuqūl*) are trustworthy as long as they are not corrupted, that is, as long as they have not deviated from the normative *fiṭra*. However, individual human beings may use their minds incorrectly and draw false conclusions if they have become accustomed to intellectual errors through the adoption of specious assumptions and erroneous beliefs. But this raises the following question: How can we, according to Ibn Taymiyya, correctly identify the content of sound human minds and uncorrupted intellectual faculties? Ibn Taymiyya addresses this problem by carrying out an inductive survey of mankind to observe what cognitive intuitions are common to all human minds. Elements shared by all human intellects (apart from those of idiosyncratic philosophers) are constitutive of a normative (cognitional) human nature or disposition (*fiṭra*). Thus, just as we can say that it is human nature to have two eyes, since every human being we have ever encountered (apart from those with impaired bodies) has two eyes, so can we assert with the same confidence that it is human nature, for instance, to recognize the truth of the law of the excluded middle or to intuit that any two existing entities must be either consubstantial with or distinct from each other ontologically. The grounds for this assertion lie in the fact that all people (apart from those whose intellects have become corrupted through faulty philosophizing) consistently report that they instinctively recognize the necessary truth of these propositions. Mass reporting of this type amounts to a kind of pan-human *tawātur* on the level of rational intuition and proper cognitive function. In this manner, *tawātur* reveals the nature of the human mind and of the uncorrupted faculties of the intellect. It is precisely by enabling an inductive study of human minds that *tawātur* allows us to identify shared cognitive intuitions that, in turn, we may take as constitutive of a normative cognitional *fiṭra*.

In summary, through his expanded conception of *tawātur*, tied to the notion of the normative *fiṭra*, Ibn Taymiyya seeks to insulate what he observes to be universally held, innate notions against the corrosive doubt engendered by specious claims put forth in the name of a (pseudo-)philosophical "reason" that would barter these basic intuitions for abstract mental constructs devoid of any proper philosophical justification, let alone ontological reality. The epistemological significance of Ibn Taymiyya's vindication, through the mechanism of *tawātur*, not only of the integrity of human sense perception but, more importantly, of what can be observed to be universally shared innate, intuitive, a priori—and hence necessary—knowledge becomes clear when placed in the context of his larger epistemological framework. Universally shared empirical experiences and innate rational intuitions—guaranteed, in the final analysis, by some type of pan-human *tawātur* based in the *fiṭra*—yield certain knowledge that cannot reasonably be subjected to doubt. Being both immediate and universal, such knowledge cannot be overturned or superseded by the derivative conclusions of speculative reason. This is particularly true when (as Ibn Taymiyya contends is normally the case) the processes of inference involved, as well as the assumptions and premises upon which they are based, are the province of a restricted number of intellectuals—intellectuals who are committed to a particular school of thought, the fundamental premises of which they have, more often than not, accepted and propagated on the basis of imitation (*taqlīd*) and prior conscious agreement (*tawāṭu'*) rather than pure intellection, as they fancy. Even if comparatively large numbers of such thinkers agreed among themselves on a position that conflicts with necessary knowledge (as al-Rāzī holds to be the case with respect to the possibility of two existing entities being neither consubstantial with nor distinct from each other),[156] this would always fall short of the overwhelming *tawātur* by which the truth of the opposite proposition has been established.[157] In essence, Ibn Taymiyya insists that immediate and universally shared knowledge—gained through a combination of sense perception (*ḥiss*), self-evident axioms (*badāʾih al-ʿuqūl*),[158] and fundamental rational intuitions grounded in the normative *fiṭra*—cannot be overridden by what he deems to be parochial conclusions derived speculatively by the pre-committed adherents of an idiosyncratic philosophical doctrine.

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[156] We recall al-Rāzī's assertion that all major Islamic theological schools hold this view, with the sole exception of the (numerically limited) Ḥanbalīs and Karrāmiyya. Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, 1:152.

[157] Not to mention that among the conditions of *tawātur* itself is that the information ulti-

It is important to underscore that Ibn Taymiyya in no manner intends to delegitimize reason or its (valid) inferential operations per se. In fact, he is concerned precisely to defend and to legitimate the innate and a priori knowledge contained in the mind against claims that such knowledge may be subject to vitiation by the deliverances of a posteriori inference. At the same time, we must not understand Ibn Taymiyya to be privileging the innate knowledge of the mind at the expense of the valid processes of rational investigation and inference of that very same mind. Rather, he is simply affirming that the results of discursive reasoning must be checked against the indubitably true contents of necessary knowledge, the fundamental axioms of reason, and the (healthy) *fiṭra* rather than the reverse.[159] When the two are thought to conflict, it is either the process of reasoned inference or the premises on which the inference is based (or both) that have somehow gone wrong, not the obvious and widely-

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mately be derived from sense experience, not from a conclusion reached through discursive inference (*naẓar*).

[158] *Darʾ*, 3:231, line 1 and 5:34, line 7. We also come across "*badāʾih al-fiṭar*" at *Darʾ*, 3:221, line 14.

[159] The reverse occurs when, for example, that which Ibn Taymiyya asserts to be necessary and immediate intuitive knowledge is taken as nothing more than "initial impressions." The philosophers, such as Ibn Sīnā, demote these "initial impressions" to the level of mere estimation (*wahm*) and imagination (*khayāl*) that the intellect can then judge to be erroneous on the basis of discursive reasoning—reasoning that, Ibn Taymiyya charges, is often based on faulty assumptions and premises. Such faulty assumptions might include, for example, the belief that mental notions such as universals possess ontological reality outside the mind. Or, as in the case of al-Rāzī, one may realize that such notions indeed exist only in the mind but nevertheless err by transferring the judgement (*ḥukm*) of what exists in the mind to the realm of external existence without justification. (See *Darʾ*, 6:19–113.) Ibn Sīnā's main passage on the *wahmiyyāt* (estimative propositions) that Ibn Taymiyya cites and critiques over the course of half a volume of the *Darʾ* (vol. 6) can be found in Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, 1:341–363 (esp. 1:353–355) and *Remarks and Admonitions*. Part One: *Logic*, 118–128 (esp. 123–124). (For a note of caution on the inadequacy of existing editions of Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt*, see Lameer, "Towards a New Edition of Avicenna's *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*.") On *wahm* in Ibn Sīnā, see Black, "Estimation (*Wahm*) in Avicenna" and, on Ibn Sīnā's epistemology more generally, Black, "Certitude, Justification, and the Principles of Knowledge," as well as Wisnovsky, "Avicenna." See also Sophia Vasalou's incisive discussion of *fiṭra* in Ibn Taymiyya, specifically in the context of Ibn Sīnā's notion of *wahm*, in Vasalou, *Theological Ethics*, 56–79. For a critical take on Ibn Taymiyya's refutation of Ibn Sīnā's *wahmiyyāt*, see Marcotte, "Ibn Taymiyya et sa critique."

shared notions rooted in the innate principles of reason and guaranteed by the *fiṭra*—as per the maxim that "necessary knowledge cannot be contradicted by the conclusions of discursive inference."[160] Where such a conflict is found to arise, Ibn Taymiyya insists that if we conduct a critical review of the terms in which the inference is stated (as per chapter 4) and of the substantive assumptions underlying its premises, we will realize in every case that it is the process of discursive reasoning that has somehow gone astray and not the underlying intuitions of the native intellect. In the case of al-Rāzī's argument presented above, the error involved is an easy one for Ibn Taymiyya to identify, as it is a classic case of confusing what exists in the mind with what exists in external reality, then assuming that the rational judgement (*ḥukm*) that applies to the former is automatically transferable to the latter. Al-Rāzī's error, according to Ibn Taymiyya, lies specifically in the assumption that the mere ability of the mind to formulate the proposition that two existent things might be neither consubstantial with nor distinct from each other automatically translates into the ontological possibility that such a thing could actually exist in the outside world, thus making it necessary to go through a process of reasoned inference to determine which of the three possibilities—consubstantial, distinct from, or neither—is correct.

In light of the foregoing, it is important to re-emphasize that Ibn Taymiyya nowhere insists, nor even suggests, that reason should somehow "submit" to revelation in the sense that one should abandon a well-grounded rational conclusion simply as a concession to sense perception or transmitted reports (specifically, revelation). On the contrary, he holds, and attempts to substantiate throughout the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, that the discordant inferential conclusion is always the result of faulty inference—what we may call "*naẓar sayyiʾ*" or "*sūʾ al-naẓar*" (lit. "bad reasoning"), in contrast to Ibn Taymiyya's *ḥusn al-naẓar* (sound reasoning)—and that a thorough and properly grounded (linguistic and) rational re-analysis of the matter will always reveal where the original inference went wrong and establish that the valid conclusions of pure reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*) do not, in fact, conflict with our innate or empirical knowledge, on the one hand, or with what we know to be the case from revelation, on the other. Thus, while we may often be alerted to our errors in rational inference by the other sources of certain knowledge and prompted thereby to correct our reasoning, we are never asked to deny the legitimate and valid conclusions of reason or to allow them simply to be overridden by "competing" sources of knowledge. Indeed, we recall that Ibn Taymiyya takes it as a fundamental premise of his epistemology that reliable sources of true knowledge are always—of necessity—complementary and corroboratory and that they can never be in bona fide competition or conflict.

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[160] "*al-naẓariyyāt lā tuʿāriḍu al-ḍarūriyyāt*." *Darʾ*, 6:11, line 11.

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In this chapter, we have learned that reality, in Ibn Taymiyya's account, consists of two realms, the seen (*shahāda*) and the unseen (*ghayb*). The mind acquires knowledge of what exists in the former by way of external sensation (*ḥiss ẓāhir*), while it acquires knowledge of what exists in the latter primarily through transmitted reports (*khabar*) as well as, to a limited degree, internal sensation (*ḥiss bāṭin*). On the basis of the empirical knowledge provided to it by the senses, the mind abstracts universal concepts that it holds as mental representations of external reality. As the knowledge of the mind is purely cognitional (*ʿilmī*) and notional (*iʿtibārī*), the rational faculty is unable to establish the factual existence of any externally existent entity (although it can, once more, affirm the existence of God on the basis of an innate, internal *sensus divinitatis*).[161] Reason nevertheless comes embedded with the innate (*fiṭrī*) and necessary (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge of certain fundamental axioms (*badīhiyyāt*), on the basis of which we are able to confer rational assent (*taṣdīq*) or form logical judgements (*aḥkām*) with respect to existing entities. The mind possesses necessary knowledge of the external reality mediated to it by the senses, of its own innate logical principles, and of whatever information has reached it by way of reports (*akhbār*) that have been passed down through recurrent mass transmission (*tawātur*) (such as, most importantly, the Qurʾānic text and a limited number of *mutawātir ḥadīth* reports). The principle of *tawātur*, however, is not limited to guaranteeing the authenticity of verbal reports. It also serves as the ultimate guarantor of the necessary knowledge mediated to the mind by the senses, as well as of the axiomatic principles of reason and of the *fiṭra* more generally, in the event that any of these sources of widely-shared, necessary knowledge should come to be undermined, impugned, or subjected to systematic doubt. Such doubt is typically the result of doctrines that have been derived through discursive reasoning (*naẓar*) on the basis of dubious premises that, Ibn Taymiyya contends, unambiguously contradict the necessary knowledge attested to by any of the sources mentioned above.

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[161] It can also affirm this on the basis of a consideration of the temporal and non-necessary nature of the universe, coupled with the mind's innate knowledge of the impossibility of an infinite causal regress. This argument, which Ibn Taymiyya holds to be that of the Qurʾān itself, represents an instance of sound rational inference (*ḥusn al-naẓar*) and may be referred to as the argument from "*mujarrad al-ḥudūth*" (though Ibn Taymiyya does not give it a formal name), that is, the argument from the "mere fact of origination (of the world)." For Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of *mujarrad al-ḥudūth* in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, see, inter alia, *Darʾ*, 3:195–199 ff. and, more extensively, *Darʾ*, 8:317–325 (esp. 8:319 and 8:321–322). At *Darʾ*, 8:319, lines 2–5, for instance, Ibn Taymiyya says (in response to al-Bāqillānī in *Sharḥ al-Lumaʿ*): "Knowledge of the temporal origination (*ḥudūth*) of that which comes into being and inferring the existence of the Creator from this [knowledge] does not require that [we] know [for instance] whether a drop of sperm is made up of individual substances or matter and whether that [substance and matter] are eternal or temporally originated. Rather, the mere fact of the origination (*mujarrad ḥudūth*) of that whose temporal origination we witness [is sufficient to] indicate [or prove] that it has an Originator, just as the temporal origination of all things that come into being indicates [or proves] that they have an Originator." (See index of Arabic passages.) Richard Frank points out that al-Ashʿarī's own argumentation for the existence of God, reasoning from creation to a Creator given the contingency of the world, "follows the *Qurʾān* very closely …, rejecting the more common *kalām* argument based on the nature of atoms and their inherent accidents." In this, al-Ashʿarī "differs from the practice of the leading Ashʿarite masters of later generations." See Frank, "Al-Ashʿarī's Kitāb al-Ḥathth," 127, n. 30.

Having laid out the fundamental components of Ibn Taymiyya's attempted hermeneutical, ontological, and epistemological reforms over the course of the past two chapters, we now turn, in the final chapter, to consider how he applies these tools to resolve, once and for all, the hitherto intractable "contradiction" between reason and revelation, particularly with regard to the question of the divine attributes.

CHAPTER 6

Reason Reconstituted: The Divine Attributes and the Question of Contradiction between Reason and Revelation

1 Rational Inference and the Question of *Qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid*

In chapter 5, we discussed Ibn Taymiyya's charge against the philosophers that their reasoning about the world and metaphysical realities rests upon a fundamentally unsound ontology that confuses, on numerous levels, the realm of external ontological existence with the realm of notional or logical existence in the mind. Specifically, we have seen that the philosophers adopt a realist conception of universals on the basis of which they accord objective ontological status to notional realities (such as universals) that, Ibn Taymiyya insists, enjoy no more than intramental existence. As such intellectual realities are, by definition, unseen (*ghayr mashhūd*) and imperceptible (*ghayr maḥsūs*), the philosophers identify them with the *ghayb* spoken of in revelation, in contrast to the *shāhid* realm of our ambient empirical reality. The result is a philosophical ontology that confines the perceptible (*maḥsūs*) to the empirical (*shahāda*) while reducing the unseen (*ghayb*) to the mental or intellectual (*maʿqūl*). Such a scheme entails—incoherently, for Ibn Taymiyya—the affirmation of externally existent realities that are entirely notional and unperceivable (such as universals). Worse, insofar as the *ghayb* is reduced to the *maʿqūl*, the philosophers' schema at the same time necessarily precludes the existence of any independent, self-standing entities (*aʿyān qāʾima bi-anfusihā*) in the *ghayb*, entities that are inherently perceptible (though veiled to our senses at the current time) and that exist independently of human reason and human minds. It is on the basis of this ontology that the philosophers end up "intellectualizing" the various unseen (*ghāʾib*) realities affirmed in revelation, as in their identification of angels with the "intellects" of the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic traditions or the broader philosophical view that the events of the afterlife, including the pleasures of paradise and the pains of hell, are merely graphic metaphors for what will essentially be experienced in intellectual, rather than sensory, terms in the hereafter.

This confusion in ontology, according to Ibn Taymiyya, has led to a parallel confusion in the rational inferences the philosophers draw about the world.

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Such inferences may collectively be referred to as *qiyās*, a term that, for Ibn Taymiyya, comprises both the categorical syllogism (*qiyās al-shumūl*[1]), which operates on the basis of a universal middle term, and analogy (*qiyās al-tamthīl*), which involves the assimilation of two particulars by virtue of a relevant shared attribute without the mediation of a common universal.[2] In both cases, an inference is drawn by transferring a judgement (*ḥukm*), either from the universal to the particular (in the case of the categorical syllogism) or from the particular to the particular (in the case of analogy).[3] The particular kind of inference relevant to the question of the divine attributes—and to the *ghayb* more generally—is known as "*qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid*," that is, "inferring [something about] the unseen on the basis of the seen," or, to put it in other terms, transferring a judgement applicable in the realm of the *shāhid* to the realm of the *ghāʾib*. Ibn Taymiyya identifies four different kinds of inference, or transfer of judgement, that one might make about the unseen realm on the basis of the perceptible realm. These inferences concern (1) factual existence (*thubūt*), (2) essential ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*) or modality (*kayfiyya*), (3) meanings and notions (*maʿānī*), and (4) logical principles and the fundamental axioms of reason (*badīhiyyāt*). Ibn Taymiyya contends that making an analogy from the seen (*shāhid*) to the unseen (*ghāʾib*) is illegitimate in the first two cases but mandatory in the second two. How is this so?

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[1] A term that may have been coined by Ibn Taymiyya himself. Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xiv, n. 17.

[2] The classic example of the categorical syllogism is "All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal." The judgement (*ḥukm*) of mortality is predicated of Socrates since he is subsumed by the middle term "man" and thus falls under the universal proposition "All men are mortal." A classic example of analogical reasoning, cited in Muslim juridical texts, is the following: "Grape wine (*khamr*) is forbidden because it intoxicates. Date wine (*nabīdh*) also intoxicates. Therefore, date wine is forbidden too." Here the judgement (*ḥukm*) of impermissibility is transferred from one particular (grape wine) to another particular (date wine) because they share in a common relevant attribute, known as the *ʿilla*, or *ratio legis* (in this case, intoxication). For Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of the syllogism, see Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xxvii–xxxii, as well as Rayan, "Ibn Taymiyya's Criticism of the Syllogism" and Rayan, "Criticism of Ibn Taymiyyah on the Aristotelian Logical Proposition."

[3] Ibn Taymiyya, in fact, argues that these two forms of inference are equivalent in substance and that they differ only in form. The analogical syllogism, for instance, can easily be recast as a categorical syllogism if the relevant attribute (that is, the *ʿilla*) has been correctly identified. Using our example of grape wine, date wine, and the attribute of intoxication (see previous note), we can say: "All intoxicants are forbidden. Grape wine (or date wine) is an intoxicant. Therefore, grape wine (or date wine) is forbidden." For Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of the substantive equivalence of analogy and the categorical syllogism, see *Darʾ*, 7:317–327 (esp. 7:318 and 7:322 ff.), as well as *Radd*, 115–122. See, in addition, *Radd*, 200–201, "talāzum qiyās al-shumūl wa-qiyās al-tamthīl wa-bayānuhu bi-l-amthila"; *Radd*, 201–203, "al-istiqrāʾ laysa istidlālan bi-juzʾī ʿalā kullī," where he explicitly denies that induction consists in inferring a universal on the basis of particulars; *Radd*, 208–214 and 233–238, responding to the critiques of the analogical syllogism put forth by Muslim rationalists; *Radd*, 348–351, "al-kalām ʿalā jins al-qiyās wa-l-dalīl muṭlaqan"; and, especially, *Radd*, 364–384, "al-adilla al-qāṭiʿa ʿalā istiwāʾ qiyās al-shumūl wa-l-tamthīl." For a presentation of Ibn Taymiyya's views on the subject, primarily as expressed in his treatise *Jahd al-qarīḥa*, see Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xxvii–xxxix. A brief discussion can also be found in Heer, "Ibn Taymiyah's Empiricism." Heer points out that Ibn Taymiyya was not the first to argue for the equivalence of syllogism and analogy and that he was preceded in this by both al-Fārābī and al-Ghazālī. See, e.g., al-Fārābī, "Kitāb al-Qiyās," 36 ff. and 54 ff.; al-Ghazālī, *Miʿyār al-ʿilm*, 165–166 ff.

Ibn Taymiyya maintains that it is invalid to draw an analogical inference (*qiyās*) or to transfer a judgement (*ḥukm*) from the seen to the unseen in terms of either the factual existence (*thubūt*) or the essential ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of something in the unseen realm. This is so because existence and ontological reality are both existential categories, and reason (as we know from chapter 5) cannot be used to establish the existence[4] or the ontological reality of anything in the *ghayb*.[5] In order to establish what exists in external reality, we are dependent on sensation (*ḥiss*) and transmitted reports (*khabar*). For our knowledge of the essential reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of a thing, we are essentially dependent on sensation alone since, according to Ibn Taymiyya, it is only through direct empirical experience that we can gain any sense of a thing's ontological reality or its modality of being in the world. To put it another way, we can only know *what* exists through sensation or reports, while we can only know something about the essential reality of *how* a thing exists through sensation alone. This being the case, we cannot, on the basis of reason, affirm the factual existence (*thubūt*) of something in the *ghayb* based on what exists in the *shahāda*. We can only make such an affirmation if we have come to know of the thing's existence through one of the two sources of existential knowledge, sensation or transmitted reports. Likewise, once we know of the existence of something in the unseen realm, it is not legitimate for us, on the basis of reason, to assume a common essential reality (*ḥaqīqa*) or equivalent modality of being (*kayfiyya*) between this and what exists in the perceptible realm. When Ibn Taymiyya states that the analogical inference from the seen to the unseen (*qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid*) is "one of the most corrupt forms of analogy" (*min afsad al-qiyās*) owing to the "(essential) difference in the ontological realities [of things]" (*li-ikhtilāf al-ḥaqāʾiq*),[6] it is *qiyās* primarily in this second sense (the sense of transferring a judgement concerning the essential ontological reality, or *ḥaqīqa*) that he has in mind. In short, since factual existence (*thubūt*) and essential reality (*ḥaqīqa*) cannot be established by reason but can only be known through sensation or reports, reason cannot serve as a basis to transfer any judgement concerning either of these two things (factual existence or essential reality) from the seen to the unseen realm. Existence and essential reality in the unseen realm can only be established by the same means used to establish them in the visible realm, namely, sensation or transmitted reports for establishing factual existence (*thubūt*) and sensation alone for establishing essential reality (*ḥaqīqa*) or modality (*kayfiyya*). Reason, for its part, can serve neither to establish existence nor to make any judgement on essential reality or modality in the absence of either reports or direct empirical experience.

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[4] See *Darʾ*, 5:254, lines 5–6, where he says, "*lā siyyamā wa-l-umūr al-ghāʾiba laysa lil-mukhbarīna bihā khibra yumkinuhum an yaʿlamū bi-ʿuqūlihim thubūt mā akhbara* [*Allāh wa-rasūluhu*] *bihi*."

[5] With the exception, once again, of God (as discussed previously).

[6] See this formulation at *Darʾ*, 3:359, lines 10–11.

Now, where we can, and indeed must, make an analogy from the visible to the invisible realm is in terms of the second two categories mentioned above, namely, the transference of meanings and notions (*maʿānī*) and the application of fundamental logical and relational principles. What, for Ibn Taymiyya, is the precise nature of the correspondence between the seen and the unseen realms on the plane of meanings and notions? We recall that universal notions existing in the mind are a mere representation, or snapshot, of the external empirical realities mediated to the mind through the senses. Just as a camera can capture only what is in front of it, so too are the universal notions that the mind abstracts from particulars conditioned and determined by the existential reality of whatever they are abstractions of. Nevertheless, we can have some notional appreciation for entities in the unseen that are reported to us through *khabar* thanks to the names (*asmāʾ*) by which these entities are described to us, even if we have no direct empirical experience of them. This is so because names (or "nouns," *asmāʾ*) denote meanings (*maʿānī*), which are, precisely, notional realities subsistent in the mind. Ibn Taymiyya, in fact, explicitly likens such *maʿānī* to universals insofar as both are originally abstracted from particulars and reside as notions in the mind, notions that are capable of subsuming, or of being applied to, any number of extant particulars. Now, since the understanding and processing of meanings (and other universal notions) is precisely what the mind is made to do, we are able to comprehend—both semantically and notionally—something of those entities that resemble, in some respects (*min baʿḍ al-wujūh*), what we know experientially in our own empirical realm.

We may illustrate this point by way of an example. If, say, we are informed through revelation that angels (existing in the realm of the *ghayb*) can see and we also know what it means for us in the realm of the *shahāda* to see (namely, to have visual apprehension of an object), then this shared meaning, which is based on a type of analogical signification (*ishtirāk maʿnawī*), must be applied to both the seen and the unseen realms equally. Thus, if angels see, this can only mean that they, like us, possess visual cognizance of objects since this is what the word “to see” means. Were this meaning not intended to apply to the angels when predicated of them, then revelation would simply not have used this term in speaking of them. In other words, there is a meaningful semblance of similarity (*mushābaha*, *tashābuh*) between what seeing means in the case of angels in the *ghayb* and what it means in our case in the realm of the *shahāda*. Were it not for this shared meaning (*maʿnā mushtarak*), the statement “angels see” would have no appreciable meaning for us whatsoever, and it would be nonsensical for revelation to have addressed us, concerning the angels, in these terms. It is noteworthy, however, that we have not established the very *existence* of the angels’ sight on the basis of analogical inference (*qiyās*) or the transference of judgement (*ḥukm*) from the seen to the unseen; rather, the existence (*thubūt*) of this reality is only known to us through transmitted reports (namely, divine revelation). Nor would we be justified in assuming any parallel in the essential ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*) or the precise modality (*kayfiyya*) of the angels’ seeing since we have no empirical experience of the angels themselves, much less of the particular manner in which they see. Nevertheless, we can know what it *means* for angels to see, even if we cannot know exactly *how* it is that they do so. And, indeed, it is only by our transferring what it means to see—that is, the meaning, or *maʿnā*, of seeing—from the visible to the invisible that we can understand anything reported to us about the unseen realm. Affirming a common meaning (*maʿnā*) of *shāhid* and *ghāʾib* entities while nevertheless admitting a substantive difference in the ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*) or modality (*kayfiyya*) in which this meaning applies to each entity is simply a rephrasing, in logical-rational terms, of our discussion in chapter 4. There, we distinguished the *taʾwīl* of unseen entities that we *can* know (namely, *taʾwīl* in the sense of explication of meaning, or *tafsīr al-maʿnā*) from the type of *taʾwīl* that we cannot know (namely, *taʾwīl* in the sense either of modality or of the ultimate reality or outcome of an affair [*ḥaqīqat mā yaʾūlu ilayhi al-amr*]).[7] In order to underscore the ultimate dissimilarity in essential ontological reality between the empirical and the invisible realms despite the applicability of common names to both realms and the comprehensibility of the universal meanings carried by these names, Ibn Taymiyya cites a saying of Ibn ʿAbbās to the effect that “the only commonality between what exists in this world and what exists in paradise is the names [by which each is described].”[8]

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[7] See chapter 4, p. 184ff. above.

[8] “*laysa fī al-dunyā mimmā fī al-janna illā al-asmāʾ*.” *Darʾ*, 6:124, line 3. (See *Darʾ*, 6:124, n. 1 for the sources of this statement.)

Yet some of what exists in the universe does not fit into our conceptual framework at all because, to use Ibn Taymiyya's term, it has no counterpart (*naẓīr*) in our empirical realm whatsoever. Where unseen realities bear no meaningful resemblance whatsoever to any element of our experience, they cannot be meaningfully named since there are no notions (*maʿānī*) or universals abstracted from our realm that could meaningfully apply to them. This is why, in addition to all the pleasures of paradise, there exists, greater than all the rest, "that which no eye has seen, nor ear has heard, nor has occurred to the heart of any man."[9] Notably, we find in this statement not only the denial of analogous empirical experience (no eye has seen and no ear has heard the likes of it) but the denial of any notional resemblance as well. Our minds, of course, can conceive of (*yataṣawwar*) many things that do not, and even cannot, exist in the empirical realm, yet we still have the ability to imagine them; that is, they can exist as notions in our minds. But that which is reserved for the inhabitants of paradise has neither any empirical nor any notional resemblance to anything we know: it surpasses even our (relatively expansive) powers of imagination. Similarly, the soul (*rūḥ*) is not named or described any further; it is simply described as being "of the affair of my Lord" (Q. *al-Isrāʾ* 17:85), a statement that underlines its unique nature and essential dissimilarity to anything else we know. Finally, while many of the attributes of God of which we have been informed correspond to attributes of which we have some experience (e.g., mercy, anger, kindness, majesty), the quintessential nature (*kunh*) of God cannot be known to us at all, not even by way of correspondence, similarity, or approximation. The complete and utter uniqueness and incomparability of the divine essence is, presumably, why the Prophet is reported to have instructed his followers not to ponder on God Himself but rather to ponder on His creation.[10] Attempting to fathom God's ultimate essence is, in fact, pointless, as we can have no understanding of it whatsoever for the simple reason that it is totally unlike—in every respect (*min jamīʿ al-wujūh*)—anything of which we have any experience and, therefore, totally unlike anything of which we have any knowledge.[11]

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[9] "*mā lā ʿaynun raʾat wa-lā udhunun samiʿat wa-lā khaṭara ʿalā qalbi bashar*" (*Darʾ*, 5:73, lines 14–15)—part of a *ḥadīth qudsī*, reported in, e.g., al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1200; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1298.

[10] "*tafakkarū fī khalq Allāh wa-lā tafakkarū fī dhāt Allāh*" (Ponder on the creation of God, but ponder not on God's essence) (*Darʾ*, 6:203, lines 9, 14)—reported as a saying of Ibn ʿAbbās with a good chain of transmission (*mawqūf ʿalā Ibn ʿAbbās bi-isnād jayyid*). See, inter alia, al-Bayhaqī, *Kitāb Asmāʾ Allāh wa-ṣifātihi*, 618, 887; Abū al-Shaykh al-Aṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-ʿAẓama*, 1:212; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-ʿArsh wa-mā ruwiya fīhi*, 342–344; al-Dhahabī, *Kitāb al-ʿArsh*, 2:133–134; Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 13:383. Another report of this incident relates that the Prophet saw a group of people and asked them, "What are you doing?" They replied, "We are pondering on the Creator" (*natafakkaru fī al-Khāliq*). He said to them, "Ponder over His creation but ponder not on the Creator, [for] you cannot encompass His immensity" (*tafakkarū fī khalqihi wa-lā tafakkarū fī al-Khāliq lā tuqaddirūna qadrahu*). This report was narrated through Ibn ʿAbbās and, with a stronger chain, as a *mursal ḥadīth*

The second type of analogy between the seen and the unseen that Ibn Taymiyya declares not simply legitimate but indeed mandatory is the analogical application to both realms of the basic rules of logic and the innate axioms of reason—what he refers to as the *badīhiyyāt*. Such principles, being axiomatic and a priori (as established in chapter 5), neither derive from nor are dependent on empirical experience and, partly for this reason, are not confined to the realm of empirical reality. By their nature, logical principles hold true universally and without exception. Thus, if it is true in our empirical realm that a thing cannot simultaneously be and not be (an instance of the law of non-contradiction), then the same must be true in the unseen realm as well. In fact, our knowledge that this law holds true in our empirical realm is not based on anything we have observed in that realm. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine what it could even mean for us to have "observed" that something cannot both be and not be at the same time. Rather, we simply know, as a matter of logical necessity, that "to be" and "not to be" are mutually contradictory and logically exclusive opposites and that, by definition, they cannot hold true for any given entity at one and the same time. Being a question of (necessary) logic rather than (contingent) ontology, this and similar principles hold true—in fact, must hold true—by self-evident logical necessity in all possible worlds, including, naturally, the world of the unseen. We are therefore perfectly justified in applying such axioms to both realms of existence since, again, we are dealing with logical and relational phenomena and passing judgements on their basis—this being part and parcel of the rational faculty and, to a substantial degree, constitutive of its very essence. It is important to underscore the fact that logical axioms are applicable to both the seen and the unseen realms, for Ibn Taymiyya often attempts to reduce his opponents' theological positions to absurdity (positions that, ultimately, relate to something in the unseen realm, namely, God) on account of their violating one or another of these fundamental and universally applicable rules of thought.[12]

(that is, one in which the name of the Companion[s] who initially transmitted the report is not mentioned). See, e.g., Ibn al-Faḍl, *Kitāb al-Targhīb wa-l-tarhīb*, 1:390 (#672); Hannād b. al-Sarī, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, 469 (#945).

[11] See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 5:73, lines 7–16.

[12] Such as the notion, examined in chapter 5, that one could coherently maintain that God is neither one with nor separate from the universe, neither inheres in it nor transcends it. See p. 268–269 ff. above.

Now, Ibn Taymiyya accuses the philosophers of speculating about the unseen realm on the basis of the visible world in the first two domains discussed above, namely, factual existence (*thubūt*) and essential ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*). Yet the inference from the seen to the unseen, as we have learned, is illegitimate in these domains since we cannot independently establish the factual existence or the existential modality of any entity merely on the basis of reason. It is precisely because the philosophers, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, have treated unseen entities as essentially analogous to those in the visible realm, particularly in terms of essential reality (*ḥaqīqa*), that they then feel compelled to deny what transmitted reports (*khabar*)—specifically those reports that constitute revelation in the form of the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*—affirm of unseen realities such as the divine attributes so as to avoid the risk of likening God in essence (that is, in His *ḥaqīqa*) to created things, which would be tantamount to *tashbīh*, or assimilationism. But the philosophers' belief that affirmation of the divine attributes would entail such assimilation is a direct result of their false assumption that the unseen realm (*ghayb*) is comparable to that of the seen (*shahāda*). In other words, it is a result of the philosophers' false starting assumptions that they believe it possible to draw an analogy in terms of essence, modality, and ontological reality between the seen and the unseen realms. In this manner, they disavow the legitimate and required forms of analogy from seen to unseen—namely, the analogy that is necessarily involved in the affirmation of a common meaning (*maʿnā*) and the common application of universal logical principles—because of the implications they believe are entailed by the illegitimate forms of analogy, those in which they have engaged on the mistaken assumption that there exists an essential ontological similarity between entities in the seen and the unseen realms that bear a common name.

In summary, the type of analogical inference (*qiyās*) from the empirically accessible, "seen" realm (*shahāda*) to the unseen realm (*ghayb*) that Ibn Taymiyya holds to be both valid and necessary is a semantic and notional analogy on the basis of shared meanings, not an analogy related to factual existence (*thubūt*) or essential ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*). Though we cannot, on the basis of reason, deduce or infer the existence of anything in the unseen realm (other than God), we can nevertheless draw upon the universal meanings (*maʿānī*) and notions (also *maʿānī*) that reason has abstracted from the visible realm—meanings and notions in terms of which our very language is patterned, since it is through language that we name various existing objects—in order to understand something about entities in the unseen realm on account of these shared meanings (*maʿānī mushtaraka*). Nevertheless, we must recognize that the ontological reality, or *ḥaqīqa*, of each entity is specific to the entity in question, and in that sense, entities in the realm of the unseen are essentially dissimilar to those in the visible world—that is, dissimilar *in essence*, which, for Ibn Taymiyya, is equivalent to a thing's very ontological reality. Finally, from a rational perspective, we must treat all realms of existence analogously with respect to the fundamental rules of logic. As a consequence, we must apply logical principles consistently both to the empirically accessible world around us and to the world of the unseen that lies beyond our sensory perception.

2 Ibn Taymiyya's Reforms Applied: The Question of the Divine Attributes

We have seen over the course of this study that the philosophers, in essence, make an appeal to reason (*ʿaql*) to argue that we must interpret the divine attributes figuratively (via *taʾwīl*) since affirming them would, on their view, entail that God and creatures participate ontologically in a common universal, negating God's unique and total dissimilarity to created beings and opening the door to *tashbīh* (assimilationism). Ibn Taymiyya, for his part, insists that we are able to understand God's attributes by virtue of their subsumption, alongside attributes present in our world, under a common meaning or notion (*maʿnā*). This, however, leads to a question. When Ibn Taymiyya says that we can only understand something if it possesses some resemblance to the created entities with which we are familiar, he explicitly uses the terms *mushābaha* and *mumāthala*, cognates of *tashbīh* and *mithl* (as in the verse "*laysa ka-**mithlihi** shayʾ*"), respectively. How, then, does Ibn Taymiyya understand *mushābaha* and *mumāthala* here in a manner that does not violate the import of this verse? In answer to this question, he maintains that there is no escaping (*lā budda min*) some element of commonality (*qadr mushtarak*) between any two existing entities, so we ought to be forthright in admitting this. Denying this premise directly entails a denial of God's very existence since one could easily argue that if God is said to exist and we are said to exist, then this would entail *tashbīh* because the word "existence" is being applied equally to God and to us (*al-ishtirāk fī ism al-wujūd*). This is precisely why the Bāṭiniyya, according to Ibn Taymiyya's understanding (as we saw in chapter 3), did not affirm God's existence, nor, absurdly, did they affirm His non-existence (thus violating the law of the excluded middle). By contrast, some later Sufis reached the opposite conclusion, maintaining instead that *we* do not exist—yet another absurdity for Ibn Taymiyya, of the order he routinely dismisses as "known to be false according to the necessary or self-evident principles of reason" (*maʿlūm al-fasād bi-ḍarūrat al-ʿaql* or *bi-l-badīha*) and as "obstinately denying [what is obvious to] the senses and reason" (*mukābara lil-ḥiss wa-l-ʿaql*).

But if there must be some element of commonality among all things that exist, including God and the created universe, where should we draw the line of acceptable overlap? At existence? At life, knowledge, and power? At mercy and retribution? Being separate from and above the universe? Possessing a hand? Ibn Taymiyya's answer to this question goes back to his conception of what we have been referring to as a thing's "essential ontological reality," or *ḥaqīqa*. This essential nature, for Ibn Taymiyya, can be reduced ultimately to the question of a thing's fundamental ontological status, and specifically to whether its being, or its existence, is necessary, eternal, perfect, and indestructible, on the one hand, or contingent, temporal, deficient, and subject to ultimate destruction, on the other. It goes without saying that the first set of qualities belongs to God alone (qualities that, in fact, constitute the principle elements by virtue of which He is God), while the second set of attributes applies to all entities other than God, whether they exist in the visible world or in the realm of the unseen. It is these four fundamental qualities (necessity vs. contingency, eternality vs. temporality, perfection vs. deficiency, and indestructibility vs. destructibility) that, for Ibn Taymiyya, define the *ḥaqīqa*, or fundamental essence, of any existing thing. Since this fundamental essence is entirely inseparable (outside the mind) from a thing's attributes, it follows that whatever attributes an entity possesses apply to it in a manner commensurate with the entity's underlying ontological reality as determined by this limited set of crucial traits. Thinking about it another way, we may say that all other attributes of a thing are "colored," or conditioned, by the ontological status (*ḥaqīqa*) of the essence in which they adhere, as determined by the four traits enumerated above.

We may illustrate Ibn Taymiyya's point by considering the attribute of knowledge. While "knowledge" means the same thing with respect to God and to humans, namely, cognition of a knowable, the knowledge predicated of human beings applies to them in a manner commensurate with their underlying essential reality, namely, contingency, temporality, deficiency, and destructibility. Like our very essence, the attribute of knowledge we possess is created, contingent, non-necessary, limited, imperfect, and ultimately abrogable altogether—as, for instance, through dementia or other memory loss and, eventually, in a definitive manner through the death of the knower himself. God's attribute of knowledge, by contrast, is fully commensurate with the essential reality of the (divine) essence in which it inheres. It is, therefore—like God Himself—necessary, unlimited (that is, it encompasses all possible knowables), perfect, and indestructible. So, while knowing means the same thing with respect to us as it does with respect to God (cognizance of a knowable) and, therefore, there exists a notional sharing between His knowing and ours, there is nevertheless a fundamental ontological distinction between the true reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of God's (necessary and perfect) knowing, on the one hand, and our (contingent, deficient, and limited) knowing, on the other. It is precisely here that the fundamental—and, for Ibn Taymiyya, decisive—distinction lies between any and all of the attributes of God and the attributes of created things. There is indeed "nothing like unto Him" since He alone, along with all His qualities, is necessary, eternal, perfect, and so on. It is in this crucial respect, and not in any other, that there is no similarity (*mushābaha*) or likeness (*mumāthala*)—that is, no *ontologically relevant* similarity or likeness—between God and anything else. Nevertheless, there is (and necessarily so) a type of resemblance between God and creation on the purely abstract level of universal meanings (*maʿānī*), without which, once more, we would have no comprehension whatsoever of anything that is absent from our senses. In the case at hand, the resemblance arises from the fact that both types of entities in question are qualified by the attribute of knowledge. We recall from our discussion in chapter 4 that were it not for this shared meaning (*maʿnā mushtarak*), the phrase "God is All-Knowing" would mean nothing to us at all. It would be the same, Ibn Taymiyya remarks, as saying that God is "*kajz*" or God is "*dīj*" or other such nonsensical statements constructed of meaningless utterances (*alfāẓ*). Yet it is precisely because the very essence and reality of a thing coincides, for Ibn Taymiyya, with its concrete ontological existence and not with the notional reality of it as conceived in the mind that he is confident in affirming all the attributes predicated of God in revelation, without running the risk of falling into the relevant kind of *tashbīh* (which is to say ontological, and not merely notional, *tashbīh*). For Ibn Taymiyya, we make proper *tanzīh* of God not by denying of Him any and all attributes that can also be truthfully predicated of a created entity; rather, we do so in two distinct and very specific ways: (1) by affirming of His essence the four essential qualities mentioned above and negating of Him their opposites and (2) by affirming of Him only what Ibn Taymiyya calls "attributes of perfection" (*ṣifāt kamāl*), such as life, power, and knowledge, and negating of Him their opposites (death, weakness, ignorance, and so forth). The first represents a *tanzīh* of God's essence; the second, a *tanzīh* of His attributes.

This way of looking at things allows God to be comprehensible to us—that is, we can understand who God is in our minds/hearts—without, however, His being "like" us or comparable to us in any ontologically relevant way, that is, in any way that would compromise His divinity by implying anything of the deficiency (*naqṣ*) or contingency by which we and every other created entity are characterized. We can understand who God is precisely because we are able to understand the meaning—and thus the *taʾwīl* in the sense of *tafsīr al-maʿnā* (simple explication of the meaning)—of the terms used to denote His attributes. Nonetheless, we can never fathom the true (ontological) reality—

that is, the *ḥaqīqa*—of these attributes nor, a fortiori, of His quintessential nature (*kunh*). This is true, as we have seen, because all existential knowledge is based on sense perception, and we only have sensory experience of a created and contingent empirical reality. We thus have no relevant experience in our empirical world on the basis of which to make an analogy (*qiyās*) from it to the realm of the unseen. And if this is true even with respect to the *created* entities of the unseen realm, then it is, emphatically, even more true with respect to God, the necessarily existent Creator of all contingent being.

3 Concluding Reflections

The *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* represents Ibn Taymiyya's attempt to transcend the centuries-old conflict between reason and revelation that had been raging on the Islamic intellectual scene from as early as the beginning of the second/eighth century. Though reason and revelation each make various kinds of affirmations that may potentially come into conflict, we have seen that the main focal point of this debate in medieval Islam centered on the question of the divine attributes. The Qurʾān and prophetic *ḥadīth* ascribe to God a large number of discrete qualities, some or all of which are denied by various philosophical and theological schools of thought or interpreted in a metaphorical fashion (via *taʾwīl*) on the basis of rational objections to the alleged implications of a straightforward, "literal" affirmation of the qualities in question. Affirmation of the offending attributes is often believed to entail an unacceptable assimilation of God to created beings (*tashbīh*) or otherwise to infringe upon philosophical notions of an utterly simple divinity uncompromised by the "compositeness" allegedly entailed by the possession of particularizing qualifications.

Ibn Taymiyya rejects in principle the type of rationalistic *taʾwīl* employed by the philosophers, the Muʿtazila, and the later Ashʿarī theologians on the grounds that it does violence to the language of revelation and, no less significantly, is diametrically opposed to the radical affirmationism that he insists was the universal stance of the Salaf and early authorities. Beyond this, he instinctively rejects the purely abstract notion of God entertained by the philosophers, for two main reasons: one ontological, the other moral and religious. Ontologically, as we have seen, Ibn Taymiyya insists that abstract notions can only exist in the mind, with the result that the more God is conceived as being abstract and wholly undefinable, the more He is reduced from the status of an objectively existent personal God to that of an amorphous mental construct existing solely in the mind of the philosopher. To Ibn Taymiyya's mind, the philosophers'

God simply does not and cannot exist in external reality—a fact that explains his charge that they were de facto atheists,[13] however lofty and laudable their intentions may have been in attempting to safeguard our conception of God from anthropomorphism and other unbecoming forms of assimilationism. In addition to his ontological concerns, the moral and religious implications of such an abstracted and ethereal view of God were naturally not lost on Ibn Taymiyya either, and, in fact, they stand at the center of his motivations for attempting to refute philosophically inspired "negationism" once and for all. Indeed, one cannot very well pray to a God incapable of hearing one's prayer, nor yet draw close to a God who is unaware of one's particular existence. The loss of God's intelligibility to us that is implicit in the philosophers' radically negative theology undermines our ability to relate to God in any meaningfully personal manner and, therefore, thwarts what Ibn Taymiyya holds to be the very purpose and pith of religion: namely, to know God (which requires that He be reasonably intelligible to us), then, consequently, to love and to worship Him. As man's ultimate felicity is dependent precisely on his doing these three things, any intellectual construct apt to foreclose one's ability to do so must needs be seen as a barrier to the achievement of that very felicity of the human soul that both philosopher and theologian ultimately seek.

Yet in his affray against the philosophers, Ibn Taymiyya is not content simply to assert the preeminence of revelation over reason, bidding reason to dutiful silence wherever revelation has spoken. Rather, he endeavors in the *Darʾ* not merely to refute the individual arguments of the philosophers and theologians but also to demolish the very foundations—linguistic, ontological, and epistemological—on which their "negationism" is based. True to his empiricist methodology, Ibn Taymiyya starts from the consideration of one particular issue, that of the divine attributes. Yet in the process of attacking and deconstructing an enormous array of arguments over the course of 4,046 pages of printed text, he implicitly constructs an alternative system of knowledge based on a reformed approach to language, a reconstructed ontology, and a broadly reconstituted notion of reason. Ibn Taymiyya secures a firm place in his new epistemology for true reports (*khabar ṣādiq*)—particularly in the form of authentic revelation (*naql ṣaḥīḥ*)—as a major source of objective knowledge about the world, in both its empirically accessible ("seen") and its unseen dimensions. While he relentlessly attacks the philosophers' realist ontology of universals, he nevertheless validates the abstracting and universalizing function of the mind and, in fact, makes this function the cornerstone of our notional access to the realm of unseen realities, including the attributes of God. Ibn Taymiyya's insistent differentiation between the existential category of essential ontological reality (*ḥaqīqa*), on the one hand, and the notional categories of universal concepts (*kulliyyāt*) and meanings (*maʿānī*), on the other, allows him to uphold the integrity and the intelligibility of the language used of God in revelation while simultaneously steering clear of *tashbīh*, interpreted as the implication of any *ontologically relevant* similarity between the eternal, necessary, and perfect God and His temporal, contingent, and necessarily imperfect creatures. Ibn Taymiyya's insistence on the ontological indivisibility of essence and existence—and particularly of essence and attributes—allows him to articulate a limited, ontologically relevant set of divine attributes (necessity, eternality, perfection, and indestructibility) that, above all else, are what radically distinguishes God's essential being from that of every other existing thing. Being of the essence, these qualities pervade the divine being and determine the ontological quality of all other attributes pertaining to God. In doing so, they exonerate the divine attributes of any deficiency one might erroneously attribute to them on account of the notional semblance they share with corresponding attributes found in human beings or other created entities. Ibn Taymiyya's insistence on the universal applicability of the a priori logical principles lodged in the mind allows him to dismiss out of hand a number of "negationist" theses on the grounds that they run afoul of the elementary principles of rational thought. Ultimately, Ibn Taymiyya grounds the final integrity of his system, and indeed of all human knowledge, in the cognitive-moral notion of the *fiṭra*, or original normative disposition, and in an expanded application of the principle of *tawātur*, against which all sources of knowledge and modes of cognition can ultimately be verified.

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[13] Ibn Taymiyya often refers to the philosophers as *malāḥida*, a term that is closer, in classical usage, to "heterodox" or "heretical" than to outright "atheist" as implied by the term as it is used today. However, he often charges them with *taʿṭīl*, that is, the comprehensive denial, or "nullification," of God's attributes, which, he maintains, is equivalent to the negation of God Himself. In Ibn Taymiyya's writings, we also encounter the terms *muʿaṭṭila* and *muʿaṭṭilat al-Ṣāniʿ*, sometimes in reference to the philosophers as a whole, but more often to the Bāṭiniyya as well as to the materialists (*dahriyya*), the Sumaniyya, and other such groups.

In broadening the sources of authentic knowledge, Ibn Taymiyya simultaneously widens the scope of the means and the steps by which knowledge can arise in the mind of a given individual.[14] Though knowledge itself is perfectly objective, in the sense that it corresponds to (*yuṭābiq*) what is factual and true in and of itself (*mā huwa thābit fī nafs al-amr*), the discrete process by which one acquires knowledge of any given knowable (*maʿlūm*) is nevertheless personal, situational, specific, and individual. Typical of Ibn Taymiyya's thought, there are no universal rules or necessary order of steps that apply to all cases. The various means of acquiring knowledge—sensation (*ḥiss*), true reports (*khabar ṣādiq*), the self-evident axioms of reason (*badīhiyyāt al-ʿaql*), sound inference (*naẓar ḥasan*), various incarnations of the mechanism of *tawātur*, the possession of a sound cognitive-moral disposition (*fiṭra salīma*)—all stand objectively at every person's disposal, yet there are often numerous paths one can tread, various corroborative combinations of these elements through which a person can attain knowledge of a given reality. What ultimately counts is the result, namely, the occurrence of knowledge in the heart/mind (*ḥuṣūl al-ʿilm fī al-qalb*). Some knowledge is gained empirically, some through reports, some through rational inference, some by intuition, and, as in the case of *tawātur*, the amount and the kind of corroborative evidence necessary to bring about knowledge are not necessarily the same for each and every person. It is misleading and abusive to confine knowledge in general to a particular order (*tartīb muʿayyan*), as do the philosophers, or to confine knowledge of God and the authenticity of revelation to a particular order, as do the theologians, or to confine the means of progress along the spiritual path (*al-wuṣūl ilā Allāh*) to a particular order, as do those who theorize Sufism; for, while there may be a set order in the mind when one theorizes about the acquisition of knowledge, the manner in which knowledge actually comes about in the external world (*fī al-khārij*) is rarely, if ever, constrained by the theoretical order projected by the intellect. Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya remarks, the various ways of coming by knowledge, the conditions attendant thereupon, and the means (*asbāb*) and order of the steps (*tartīb*) through which knowledge is attained are too diverse and expansive to be confined to only a few discrete pathways or methods.[15]

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[14] See *Darʾ*, 8:20–21 for Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of this point.

Though Ibn Taymiyya does not say so himself, this idea of variegated yet mutually corroborative paths to knowledge of a single fact or reality is reminiscent of the transmission of *mutawātir ḥadīth* reports, whereby different individuals may have one and the same *ḥadīth* from a varied conglomeration of sources. Each is justified in claiming knowledge of the *ḥadīth*'s authenticity since he has received it from enough mutually corroborative sources to experience within himself assurance (*ṭuma'nīna*) and firm conviction (*iʿtiqād jāzim*) that the *ḥadīth* is true. That is, each has justified and sufficient (though not necessarily identical) grounds to hold that knowledge of the *ḥadīth*'s authenticity has successfully "occurred in his heart/mind" (*ḥaṣala fī qalbihi*). As we have seen, the idea and method of *tawātur* run consistently throughout Ibn

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[15] "*wa-ṭuruq al-ʿilm wa-l-aḥwāl wa-asbāb dhālika wa-tartībuhu awsaʿ min an tuḥṣara fī baʿḍ hādhihi al-ṭarāʾiq.*" *Darʾ*, 8:21, lines 4–6.

Taymiyya's epistemology, whereby he appeals to some notion of *tawātur* as the final justification even for knowledge that is essentially empirical, as well as for knowledge that is of an intuitive or a priori nature. Thus, as we reflect upon the underlying themes of Ibn Taymiyya's approach to knowledge, inferences, and proofs, it is not surprising to discover that he conceives of these in much the same way across all domains. Beyond its thoroughgoing consistency, Ibn Taymiyya's epistemology represents an attempt to profile the sundry ways in which knowledge is actually engendered in the real world. He presents this epistemology as an alternative—and, to his mind, an antidote—to the various methods and categories of the philosophers. In Ibn Taymiyya's view, not only is the way of the philosophers arbitrarily restrictive—with a heavy, almost exclusive reliance on formal, syllogistic demonstration—but it is also anathema to him insofar as he considers it to be based on a purely abstract and idealized notion of what constitutes proof or a reliable indicator of knowledge.[16]

Ibn Taymiyya's empirically grounded and widely cast epistemological framework underscores a larger commitment on his part to a broad-based, fundamentally catholic vision of human knowledge.[17] Ibn Taymiyya censures the philosophers for presuming that theoretical or speculative reason holds pride of place in the epistemic hierarchy, sometimes to the point that they allow it to override more basic empirical or a priori knowledge, which, in turn, they demote to mere "estimation" (*wahm*) or "imagination" (*takhyīl*) in order to accommodate the deliverances of abstract speculation. For Ibn Taymiyya, this state of affairs is entirely backward, for it is precisely the immediacy and sheer self-imposition of these basic sources of knowledge that justify them and ground their ultimate authority. This principle holds for Ibn Taymiyya's larger conception of "pure reason," or *ʿaql ṣarīḥ*, as well. I have referred to Ibn Taymiyya's notion of reason primarily as "pure" or "true" or "sound" reason, but his specific use of the term *ṣarīḥ*—as opposed to a term like *salīm* or *ṣaḥīḥ*—is not, I think, a mere play on words for the sake of euphony, as when the phrase "*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*" is paired with "*naql ṣaḥīḥ*." Rather, his use of the term *ṣarīḥ* (clear, pure, unadulterated) is deliberate, for it is precisely *ṣarīḥ* reason that is *ṣaḥīḥ* reason: correct and valid.[18] Sound reason and valid rational knowledge are guaranteed by the same immediacy and self-imposition as all other sources of knowledge—yet another instance of the consistency of Ibn Taymiyya's thought and methodology across various domains. This explains why arcane, circuitous, highly speculative—and, therefore, highly contentious and disputed—premises and arguments necessarily arouse Ibn Taymiyya's suspicion, as these epistemic vices are the polar opposite of those qualities that guarantee the integrity of our knowledge in all other domains.[19] Why then, Ibn Taymiyya seems to be asking, should rational knowledge, to the exclusion of all other avenues of knowing, form a singular exception to the rule of immediacy and intuitive clarity? For Ibn Taymiyya, it is simply inconceivable that the propositions held instinctively to be true in a natural and unaffected manner by multitudes of average human beings could be subject to falsification on the basis of the recondite philosophical musings of the few, who even have trouble reaching agreement among themselves on the sundry conclusions of their speculative endeavors. Overriding the intuitions of the many in favor of the speculations of the few, he argues, would effectively destroy the possibility of any objective, publicly shared rational knowledge whatsoever.

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[16] See Ibn Taymiyya, *Radd*, 88, "ḥaṣr al-ʿilm ʿalā al-qiyās qawl bi-ghayr ʿilm." Also *Radd*, 122–125, 162–163.

[17] Yahya Michot has come to a similar conclusion. See, e.g., Michot, "Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary," 170–172. See also Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 22.

[18] Consider the following phrase: "*al-ṭuruq al-fiṭriyya al-ʿaqliyya al-sharʿiyya al-qarība al-ṣaḥīḥa*." *Darʾ*, 8:314, line 13. The various terms Ibn Taymiyya associates here—"innate" (*fiṭrī*), "rational" (*ʿaqlī*), "scriptural" or "scripturally validated" (*sharʿī*), "commonplace, familiar" (*qarīb*), and "valid, correct" (*ṣaḥīḥ*)—are a keen indicator of his overall views

The foregoing considerations highlight Ibn Taymiyya's acute sense of epistemological egalitarianism, at least concerning broad principles and basic inferences. In Ibn Taymiyya's epistemology, authentic knowledge is available to anyone whose basic rational faculty and *fiṭra* are intact, not just an elite coterie of philosophers who maintain an entirely different conception of reality from that of the common man. He does, of course, admit that particular sciences, be they religious or secular, are necessarily cultivated by specialists who, naturally, know better and know more about the subject at hand than the non-specialist. This holds true in such domains as law, *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, and grammar, but also in non-religious sciences like physics, astronomy, and medicine. Yet these individual sciences do not touch upon, nor purport to set the agenda for, a larger epistemological project aimed at defining what does and does not constitute ultimate truth and reality. In other words, they do not aim to underwrite an entire *Weltanschauung*, as do the core philosophical disciplines of metaphysics, ontology, and epistemology. It is inconceivable to Ibn Taymiyya that foundational matters of such comprehensive reach, which determine to a large extent a person's fundamental existential orientation, should be captive to the

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regarding the character of truth and of the pure reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*) by which it is ascertained, appropriated, and comprehended.

[19] Recall from chapter 4 his citation of ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd's characterization of the Salaf as "having the purest hearts, possessing the deepest knowledge, and exhibiting the least unnatural strain and affectation (*takalluf*)" of all Muslim generations. (See p. 208 above.)

ruminations of a small group of conflicted specialists. The basic facts about reality, the universe, God, and man are truths available equally to anyone whose *fiṭra* and reasoning have not fallen prey to corruption. Ibn Taymiyya holds this position with respect to both rational and theological truths, for the Qurʾān is addressed to the commoner as well as to the elite. Furthermore, he insists, it conveys a unified and consistent doctrine that can be comprehended by all, and in essentially the same terms. As in other fields of knowledge, some may be more knowledgeable than others about the details of the specialized religious sciences, but there can be no fundamentally different mode of reading the texts reserved for the elite (as advocated, for example, by Ibn Rushd).

Once again, we can discern a parallelism here in the way Ibn Taymiyya treats rational knowledge and revealed knowledge, as both are integrated into an organic epistemology characterized by a high degree of consistency and correspondence among its various components. In the case of both religious and non-religious knowledge, the basic principles are self-evident and known to all, with details filled in by studied specialists. Yet the detailed knowledge of the specialist serves primarily to elaborate the already existing, publicly shared base of the knowledge in question; it does not, for Ibn Taymiyya, represent a situation in which the "true" knowledge possessed by the elite constitutes a fundamental departure from what is generally understood to be the case by the common man. Ibn Taymiyya's aversion to the convoluted nature of the philosophers' discourse and his disdain for what to him are their tortuous meanderings and abstruse doctrines should in no way be taken as an indication of a shallow wit on his part or an insufficient capacity truly to grasp and to come to terms with his opponents' contentions. Indeed, his ability to pen a work such as the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* establishes beyond any doubt that Ibn Taymiyya was no philosophical simpleton.

Of all the various elements of Ibn Taymiyya's reconstituted rationality, perhaps the most intriguing, original, and also the most subtle is his conception of the nature and function of the *fiṭra*. While it is impossible to do justice to our author's understanding of the *fiṭra* in a few short paragraphs,[20] our exploration of reason and rationality in Ibn Taymiyya's thought would be incomplete were I not to offer, in closing, a few brief reflections on this central concept. We encountered the concept of the *fiṭra* in chapter 5 primarily as a cognitive faculty that overlaps to a considerable degree with the intuitive or a priori knowledge lodged in the mind ab initio. Beyond this, however, Ibn Taymiyya also suggests that the *fiṭra* is that faculty by which we judge both the soundness of premises used in a demonstration and the soundness of the deductive arguments built upon such premises.[21] Yet the *fiṭra* is more than this. I have suggested that an apt translation of the term *fiṭra* might be "original normative disposition," and indeed, Ibn Taymiyya's variegated appeals to the *fiṭra* in diverse contexts indicate that we should regard *fiṭra* as a more general, underlying principle that has relevance to and informs the various other faculties we possess—not only cognitive but moral-ethical and spiritual as well. In fact, from Ibn Taymiyya's perspective, it would be more accurate to say not that *fiṭra* is a moral *and* cognitive faculty but rather that it is a moral *cum* cognitive faculty, as ultimately the two cannot be definitively separated. Perhaps we can best understand Ibn Taymiyya's point by considering the following anecdote.

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[20] For more extensive treatments of the *fiṭra* in Ibn Taymiyya, see sources listed at p. 260, n. 113 above.

Ibn Taymiyya relates that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and a certain Muʿtazilī theologian with whom he had been debating were one day visiting a Sufi shaykh in Transoxania who claimed to have achieved certain knowledge (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*).[22] Al-Rāzī and his companion were surprised at the shaykh's claim since the two of them had been debating theology for years, constantly refuting each other's arguments but never able to break through to any indisputably certain conclusions on the topics of contention between them. When asked how he had achieved this certainty in knowledge, the shaykh responded, "[By] divine disclosures (or gifts in the form of insights) (*wāridāt*) that come over the soul and that the soul is unable to deny."[23] Ibn Taymiyya reports that the Muʿtazilī theologian, who had been complaining of doubts and confusions (*shubuhāt*) burning up his heart, took to the way of the shaykh and eventually reached the stage where God blessed him with similar gifts of divine insight, whereupon he declared that if upholding the apparent (*ẓāhir*) sense of "The Most Merciful has settled upon the throne"[24] constitutes corporealism (*tajsīm*), then, by God, he is a corporealist. Ibn Taymiyya reports that this (former) Muʿtazilī, having returned to the way of affirmationism through the spiritual insights vouchsafed directly to his heart, went on to become one of the most illustrious (Sufi) shaykhs of his day in the lands of Jurjan and Khwarizm. The point of this episode, and Ibn Taymiyya's approbatory citation of it, seems to be that certitude in knowledge is achieved when the heart/mind (*qalb*) has come to experience whatever knowledge it possess as certain and entirely immune to doubt or recusal. As we saw above with respect to knowledge more generally, one is not necessarily obligated to follow a particular path to reach this certitude, nor does this certitude necessarily have to be articulable through particular expressions or modes of rational inference or analysis. In the case at hand, our theologian and his shaykh appear to have gained and experienced certitude directly from their *fiṭra*.[25] If the *fiṭra* has been corrupted—through, for instance, the inculcation of erroneous doctrines that contravene necessary and intuitive knowledge, as was the case with the "negationism" of al-Rāzī's companion—then there are various ways in which this *fiṭra* can be resuscitated and returned to its original state. This might involve a process of sound rational investigation (that is, *ḥusn al-naẓar* and not the purely speculative argumentation of the philosophers and *mutakallimūn*), or spiritual purification (as in this case of our theologian with the burning heart), or other means. Ibn Taymiyya's point is that regardless of the means adopted, once the *fiṭra* has been rehabilitated to its natural, healthy state, it is often able simply to recognize the truth as such, in much the same way that the body possesses a capacity (*quwwa*) by which it instinctively distinguishes wholesome food from foul.[26]

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[21] See, for example, *Darʾ*, 7:37, lines 17–19, where he states, "*wa-illā fa-man rajaʿa fī muqaddimātihā ilā al-fiṭar al-salīma wa-iʿtabara taʾlīfahā lam yajid fīmā yuʿāriḍu al-samʿiyyāt burhānan muʾallafan min muqaddimāt yaqīniyya taʾlīfan ṣaḥīḥan*" (Whoever judges the premises [of an argument] and their manner of composition in light of his sound *fiṭra* will not find any [conclusion] that contradicts revelation to rest on a demonstrative proof validly constructed from definitively true premises). Here, Ibn Taymiyya explicitly states that we must return to "sound *fiṭra*" to judge the premises (*muqaddimāt*) of an argument, as well as the construction (*taʾlīf*) of the demonstration itself.

[22] For this anecdote, see *Darʾ*, 7:430, line 17 to 7:432, line 6.

[23] "*wāridāt taridu ʿalā al-nufūs taʿjizu al-nufūs ʿan raddihā.*" *Darʾ*, 7:431, lines 7–8.

[24] "*al-Raḥmānu ʿalā l-ʿarsh istawā*" (Q. *Ṭā Hā* 20:5).

The fact that the *fiṭra* is both a cognitive and a moral faculty introduces an important ethical and existential dimension into the process of knowing—a dimension that Ibn Taymiyya would argue is always present implicitly, albeit usually unacknowledged. This conception of the *fiṭra* provides for a richer and more nuanced account of knowledge and the process of coming to know. But does the introduction of an ethical and moral aspect into the cognitive functions of the *fiṭra*—and of the intellect more generally—render knowledge, for all intents and purposes, hopelessly subjective? After all, the primordial *fiṭra* with which each child is born[27] is often corrupted, as we fail, more often than not, to maintain it in its original normative state. In practice, this original normative *fiṭra* is routinely reshaped—and, indeed, corrupted—by the ambient beliefs and practices of one's society. On this point, Ibn Taymiyya makes what, to my mind, is a remarkable observation regarding the relativity of what passes for "reason" in a given culture. He observes, almost in passing, that "every nation or society (*umma*) has *what it calls* 'rational knowledge' (*maʿqūlāt*)."[28] In other words, he is telling us, a great deal of what is taken as rationality in any given time or place is ultimately determined by the dominant presuppositions and mental habits of a people that, by virtue of their near ubiquity, take on the appearance and force of necessary truths, simply given and utterly taken for granted. Ibn Taymiyya, without a doubt, views the philosophers as being precommitted (quite in spite of themselves) to an intellectual system characterized by a very particular (not to mention peculiar) view of reason and reality, a system that they have adopted, in essence, not as a matter of pure rationality and the unbiased cogitations of objective reason but, rather, as a matter of habituation to a transmitted doctrine and basing themselves, ultimately, on the mere "imitation" (*taqlīd*) of their own earlier authorities—their own "Salaf," we might say.[29] For Ibn Taymiyya, the philosophers' idiosyncratic views regarding the intelligible world, the various intellects, and so forth derive so clearly from the parochial *maʿqūlāt* of one particular *umma* and lack any kind of objective proof or verifiability whatsoever from either sense perception or transmitted reports (in the form of authentic revelation); yet the philosophers illegitimately universalize such "*maʿqūlāt*" and confound them with reason per se. But longstanding acclimatization to essentially unfounded beliefs about the world derived through pure speculation can eventually pervert the cognitive dimension of the *fiṭra*. Add to this the moral corruptibility to which all are susceptible in some measure and the primordial *fiṭra* would seem to be hopelessly and irretrievably lost. Between culturally inflected notions of rationality and the capriciousness of our own selves, we would seem to be sunk in an intractable quagmire of parochialism and subjectivity.

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[25] Ibn Taymiyya certainly holds that the healthy *fiṭra* can recognize the truth of the affirmationists' position regarding the divine attributes.

[26] *Darʾ*, 5:62, lines 11–15.

[27] From the *ḥadīth* "Every child is born on [i.e., in a state of] the *fiṭra*" (*kullu mawlūd yūladu ʿalā al-fiṭra*). See discussion above at p. 260 ff. For documentation of the *ḥadīth* itself, see p. 261, n. 117.

Yet Ibn Taymiyya is no postmodernist. Objective truth, he insists, not only exists but is also ascertainable. In the previous chapter, we examined at length the various means at our disposal for acquiring knowledge about the world—in both its empirically accessible (*shāhid*) and its "hidden" or unseen (*ghāʾib*) dimensions—such as sensation, transmitted reports (particularly revelation), the apprehension of fundamental rational axioms, and sound inference. I have also described Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of the *fiṭra* as underlying—and thus informing and affecting the functioning of—these other sources. *Fiṭra* is to the moral-cognitive dimension of a man as health is to his body. Good health entails the proper functioning of all our various sensory organs, limbs, and other physiological systems. Ill health impairs them all alike. Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya defines true rational knowledge (*ʿaqliyyāt*) as that which is intelligible (*maʿqūl*) and recognizable as such to the healthy *fiṭra*.[30] This being the case, he suggests that one way of resolving intractable disputes over knowledge and truth (such as those between al-Rāzī and his Muʿtazilī friend) is by seeking recourse to those of sound *fiṭra* (like the Sufi shaykh from Transoxania). But if the totality of our cognitive and moral faculties are dependent on the health of the *fiṭra* and if the *fiṭra* itself is not immune to dereliction, then wherein lies the ultimate grounding, and guarantee, of our faculties of reason and cognition?

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[28] "*mā min umma illā wa-lahum mā* ***yusammūnahu*** *maʿqūlāt*" (emphasis mine). *Darʾ*, 5:243, lines 16–17.

[29] See *Darʾ*, 9:254, lines 16–17, where Ibn Taymiyya refers to Ibn Sīnā's famous *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* as "the Qurʾān/holy writ (*muṣḥaf*) of those philosophers" (also cited in Michot, "Ibn Taymiyya's Commentary on Avicenna's *Ishārāt*, *namaṭ* X," 120–121). See similar at *Darʾ*, 6:19, lines 7–8, where he says that the *Ishārāt* is "like the Qurʾān to those heretical philosophizers/pseudo-philosophers" (*hiya ka-l-muṣḥaf li-hāʾulāʾi al-mutafalsifa al-mulḥida*) and *Darʾ*, 6:55, line 13, where he refers to *namaṭ* IX of the *Ishārāt*, "Maqāmāt al-ʿārifīn," as "the epilogue (*khātima*) of their *muṣḥaf* [i.e., the *Ishārāt*]."

The answer to this question brings us full circle. Ibn Taymiyya, we have remarked, views reason and revelation as mutually concomitant (*mutalāzimān*), each ultimately entailing the other. Following reason, he insists, must eventually lead to the investigation and affirmation of the truth of revelation. Starting with revelation quickens reason, inciting us to reflection and exemplifying the optimal use of reason and rational inference. Yet this concomitance between reason and revelation involves a much deeper symbiosis. Revelation is addressed to intelligent beings and cannot be properly understood in the absence of pure reason (*ʿaql ṣarīḥ*) and sound rational investigation (*naẓar ḥasan*), as we have explored over the course of this study. More significantly, however, reason itself—particularly through its foundation in the moral-cognitive faculty of the *fiṭra*—cannot hope to function properly and to fulfill its own native potential without the guiding light of revelation and the ethical practice of religion to which revelation summons.

Here, at the end of our journey, we recall the very first page of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, where Ibn Taymiyya cites the universal rule and its contention that, should reason and revelation ever conflict, revelation must yield to reason since it is the latter that grounds our rational assent to the authenticity of the former. While it is true, for Ibn Taymiyya, that our knowledge of the authenticity of revelation is (or at least potentially is) grounded in reason, he is adamant that pure reason and authentic revelation—*ʿaql ṣarīḥ* and *naql ṣaḥīḥ*—can never conflict (as he argues most insistently in the *Darʾ* with respect to the divine attributes). Yet beyond this mutual implication and harmonious concordance, if it is true that reason, to a degree and from a certain perspective, undergirds our knowledge of the authenticity of revelation, it is nevertheless revelation that, in a deeper and more all-embracing manner—precisely through maintaining the moral and cognitive viability of the *fiṭra*—ultimately grounds, preserves, and promotes the proper offices of reason.

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[30] *"al-ʿaqliyyāt al-ṣaḥīḥa mā kāna maʿqūlan lil-fiṭar al-salīma al-ṣaḥīḥat al-idrāk allatī lam yafsud idrākuhā." Darʾ*, 7:43, lines 3–4.

APPENDIX A

Summary Outline of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*

I. Volume 1
- A. The universal rule for reconciling reason and revelation (4–8)
- B. The two "innovated" methods of reconciliation: alteration of meaning (*tabdīl*) and presumption of ignorance (*tajhīl*) (8–20)
- C. The goal of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*: To demonstrate the invalidity of the universal rule (*al-qānūn al-kullī*) (20–24)
- D. The beginning of Ibn Taymiyya's detailed refutation of the universal rule (86)
- E. Arguments 1–19 (86–406)
    1. Argument 1 (86–87)
    2. Argument 2 (87)
    3. Argument 3 (87–133)
    4. Argument 4 (134–137)
    5. Argument 5 (137)
    6. Argument 6 (138–144)
    7. Argument 7 (144–148)
    8. Argument 8 (148–156)
    9. Argument 9 (156–170)
    10. Argument 10 (170–192)
    11. Argument 11 (192–194)
    12. Argument 12 (194)
    13. Argument 13 (195)
    14. Argument 14 (195–198)
    15. Argument 15 (198–200)
    16. Argument 16 (201–208)
    17. Argument 17 (208–279)
    18. Argument 18 (280–320)
    19. Argument 19 (320–406)

II. Volume 2
- A. What revelation indicates concerning God's actions (3–147)
- B. A discussion of the three main positions people hold on the question of God's actions (147–244)
- C. The way of the authoritative scholars (*aʾimma*) on the question of the Qurʾān (244–291)

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- D. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal on God's actions, with commentary by Ibn Taymiyya (291–304)
- E. The different positions held concerning the question of God's speech and the failure of the authors on *uṣūl al-dīn* to mention the position of the Salaf (304–324)
- F. Al-Rāzī on the question of the Qurʾān (324–344)
- G. Al-Rāzī's five proofs for the temporal origination of the world (344–399)
  - 1. Al-Rāzī's first proof: The impossibility of an infinite regress with respect to motion (345–399)

III. **Volume 3**

- A. Al-Rāzī's four remaining proofs for the temporal origination of the world (3–30)
- B. Al-Āmidī's method for proving the temporal origination of the world (30–36)
- C. The methods of the *mutakallimūn* for disproving the possibility of an infinity (particularly an infinite causal regress) (44–62)
- D. On proofs for the existence of God (72–118)
  - 1. Al-Rāzī's five proofs (72–87)
  - 2. Al-Āmidī's proof in his *Abkār* (88–99)
- E. Five arguments for proving the impossibility of an infinite regress (99–104)
- F. A discussion on knowledge, universals and particulars, deductive reasoning, the role of the *fiṭra*, and the status of signs (*āyāt*) as indicators of knowledge (118–140)
- G. Further discussion on causality and the nature of infinity (commenting on al-Suhrawardī, al-Āmidī, Ibn Sīnā, and al-Abharī) (172–264)
- H. A critique of Ibn Sīnā's method for proving the existence of God; the way of the *fiṭra* (264–269)
- I. Further discussion of causes, causality, and infinite regress; prophetic method grounded in both faith and rational demonstration (286–318)
- J. Conceptions (*taṣawwurāt*) and the nature of definitions (318–333)
- K. Various methods for proving the existence of God; a critique of Ibn Sīnā's notion of the "eternal contingent" (333–351)
- L. Discussion of passages from al-Āmidī, al-Shahrastānī, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd, and Ibn al-Tūmart on various topics (351–454)

IV. **Volume 4**

- A. The question of the advent of temporal events in God's essence (18–115)
- B. Al-Āmidī on God's speech, corporealism, essence and existence, composition, and the advent of originated events in God's essence (115–284)

C. Al-Ghazālī's charge that the philosophers are unable to prove the incorporeality of God (284–295)

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APPENDIX B

Detailed Outline of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*

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Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql

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    - A. Alteration of meaning (*tabdīl*), comprising two types: (8–15)
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        - 2. Distorting meaning through figurative interpretation (*taḥrīf* and *taʾwīl*) (12–15)
            - – The word *taʾwīl* (14–15)
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  C. Summary (19–20)
xi. The goal of the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*: To demonstrate the invalidity of the universal rule (*al-qānūn al-kullī*) (20–24)
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  – The permissibility of addressing specialists using their technical terms (43–46)
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xiv. The beginning of Ibn Taymiyya's detailed refutation of the universal rule, from various "points of view" (*wujūh*) [hereafter rendered as "arguments"] (86)
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xvi. Argument 2 (87)
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    – Two objections, with rebuttal (173–176)
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  C. Objection: The validity of revelation is affirmed (only) as long as it does not contradict reason, with rebuttal (7 points) (177–192)

XX. Argument 11: Much of what is called a proof is not a proof (192–194)

XXI. Argument 12: All rationally derived conclusions that contradict revelation are known by reason to be invalid (194)

XXII. Argument 13: Those revealed matters that reason is said to contradict are known of necessity to be part and parcel of the religion (195)

XXIII. Argument 14: Knowledge of the intentions and objectives of the Prophet is both necessary and certain knowledge (195–198)

XXIV. Argument 15: The opposite of a "*sharʿī*" proof is not a rational one but an innovated one (198–200)

XXV. Argument 16: The opponents end up with either *taʾwīl* or *tafwīḍ*, both of which are invalid (201–208)

XXVI. Argument 17 (208–279)

  A. "Innovated" rational discourse is built on vague and ambiguous statements that contain both truth and falsehood (208–222)

  B. The people of innovation use the words of the Qurʾān, Sunna, and the Arabic language but intend them in senses that differ from their conventional meanings (222–223)

  C. The meaning of "*tawḥīd*" in the Qurʾān and Sunna is different from what the people of innovation mean by it (224–228)

  D. On the necessity of either refraining from the use of innovated terms or accepting only those terms whose meaning conforms with the Qurʾān and Sunna (229–240)

  E. Words are of two kinds: Those used in revelation and those without a basis in the revealed texts (240–249)

    1. Example of the word *ruʾya* with respect to seeing God in the hereafter (250–254)
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  A. The rational arguments that form the basis for opposing scriptural proofs are invalid and contradictory (280)

  B. The meaning of *murakkab* (composed) and *iftiqār* (dependence) (280–282)

- C. The doctrine of those who negate the divine attributes, with rebuttal (3 points) (282–292)
- D. Is God's existence the same as His essence or superadded to it? (292–296)
- E. Recognizing misguidance and avoiding it (296–310)
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- A. The invalidity of the argument for the existence of God from the temporal origination of motion and accidents (320–327)
- B. The views of the *mutakallimūn* and the philosophers concerning the divine will (327–334)
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    1. Discussion of the different kinds of infinite regress (*tasalsul*) and which among them are possible or impossible (351–370)
    2. Discussion of whether one of two equally possible contingents can come about without a determining cause (*al-tarjīḥ bi-lā murajjiḥ*) (371–374)
- E. Every argument used by the negationists proves the opposite of their position (374–377)
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- A. The question of the existence of voluntary actions in God and the Salaf's positions on it (18–115)

    [Consists almost entirely of citations from numerous figures, without commentary by Ibn Taymiyya.]
- B. What the Qur'ān indicates concerning the question of God's actions (115–124)
- C. What the Sunna indicates concerning God's actions (124–147)

II. A discussion of the three main positions people hold on the question of God's actions (147–244)

[Includes Ibn Taymiyya's commentary on excerpts from al-Rāzī, al-Āmidī, Ibn Malkā, and al-Juwaynī, as well as some objections by the *mutakallimūn* to al-Rāzī and Ibn Taymiyya's response to them.]

III. The way of the authoritative scholars (*aʾimma*) on the question of the Qurʾān (244–291)

[Consists of Ibn Taymiyya's commentary on ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Kinānī regarding the Qurʾān and the divine attributes. Includes a digression (pp. 282–288) containing a response by Ibn Taymiyya to the philosophers on the question of the infinite regress.]

IV. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal on God's actions, with commentary by Ibn Taymiyya (291–304)

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VI. The failure of authors on *uṣūl al-dīn* to mention the position of the Salaf (concerning God's speech) (309–324)

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I. Continuation of the discussion on the temporal origination of the world (3–44)

   A. Al-Rāzī's four remaining proofs from the *Arbaʿīn* for the temporal origination of the world with an objection to each by al-Urmawī, followed by comments from Ibn Taymiyya (3–30)

   B. Al-Āmidī's method for proving the temporal origination of the world, with al-Āmidī's objection to al-Rāzī and Ibn Taymiyya's commentary (30–36)

   C. Another method by a *mutakallim* for proving the temporal origination of the world (36–44)

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- V. Important epistemological discussions, including topics such as self-evident and necessary knowledge, universal propositions and their relation to particulars, deductive reasoning, the role of the *fiṭra*, and the status of signs (*āyāt*) as indicators of knowledge (118–140)
- VI. Al-Rāzī's agreement with Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Rushd's criticism of Ibn Sīnā, on topics such as the existence of God in light of causality, the two kinds of circularity and the two kinds of infinite regress, and the non-self-sufficiency of natural or other secondary causes (140–162)
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(Resumption of Ibn Taymiyya's discrete arguments against the universal rule)

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- V. Rebuttal of al-Rāzī's argument in the *Arbaʿīn* that if the knowledge of God's being above (and, hence, His being separate from and spatially located with respect to creation) were self-evident, it would not have been possible for large numbers of people to concur on denying it. (All items include comments by Ibn Taymiyya.) (113–288)
  - A. Al-Rāzī's first argument
    - 1. First response to al-Rāzī's first argument (113–267)
      - (a) ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Kinānī and Ibn Kullāb on *ʿuluww* and *istiwāʾ* (115–127)
      - (b) Response to those who refrain from ascribing either of two opposite properties to God (e.g., being either inside or outside the universe) on the grounds that anything susceptible of such qualification can only be a body (4 points) (127–137)
      - (c) Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal on the affirmation of *ʿuluww* and *istiwāʾ* and his discussion of God's being "with" creation (137–149)
      - (d) Al-Rāzī's response in the *Arbaʿīn* to those who hold that God indwells in the universe (*al-ḥulūliyya*) (149–163)
      - (e) Ibn ʿArabī on the relation between the necessary and the contingent (163–186)
      - (f) Al-Abharī on an infinite regress of motions (186–197)
      - (g) Al-Ashʿarī, al-Bāqillānī, Abū Yaʿlā, and Ibn Rushd on *ʿuluww*, *istiwāʾ*, and *jiha* (197–226)
      - (h) Ibn Rushd on seeing God in the hereafter (*al-ruʾya*) (226–249)
      - (i) The position of the Salaf and authoritative scholars on God's being above (*ʿuluww*) and His being distinct and separate from creation (*mubāyana*) (250–267)
        - – The meaning of "*istiwāʾ*" (258–260)
    - 2. Second, third, and fourth responses to al-Rāzī's first argument (267–272)
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Argument 43 (cont.)

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ii. Further arguments by al-Rāzī in *Lubāb al-Arbaʿīn* concerning spatial location (*jiha*) and being above (*ʿuluww*) with respect to God, with responses by Ibn Taymiyya (10–99)
iii. Al-Bayhaqī's epistle on the virtues of al-Ashʿarī (in which Ibn Taymiyya endorses al-Bayhaqī's and Ibn ʿAsākir's defense of al-Ashʿarī's integrity) (99–103)
iv. Al-Ashʿarī in the *Ibāna* on affirming the divine attributes in their obvious sense *bi-lā kayf*, with comments by Ibn Taymiyya (103–107)
v. Objection, raised by those who deny the attributes, that the early community, based on their knowledge of the Arabic language, did not understand the Qurʾān to be affirming that God is in His essence above the throne, with Ibn Taymiyya's response (4 points) (107–127)
vi. Response to those who claim that the Qurʾān does not indicate God's being above or any of His attributes by way of affirmation or negation (127–140)

Argument 44 (All items include comments by Ibn Taymiyya.) (140–464)

vii. Al-Ghazālī's critique of *kalām* in the *Iḥyāʾ* (145–150)
viii. Al-Juwaynī in the *Burhān* on rational syllogism and analogy based on the texts, Ibn Taymiyya's identification of these as *qiyās al-shumūl* and *qiyās al-tamthīl*, respectively, and his argument for their interchangeability (150–157)
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x. Lengthy citation from al-Ashʿarī's *Risāla ilā ahl al-thaghr* on change, temporal origination, signs of the existence of God in the universe, proofs of prophethood, and similar (186–224)
xi. Al-Shahrastānī in *Nihāyat al-iqdām* on the temporal origination of the world (224–229)
xii. Al-Rāzī on proving the existence of God (229–236)
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xix. Resumption of al-Khaṭṭābī's discussion in the *Ghunya*; al-Khaṭṭābī in *Shiʿār al-dīn*, with extensive comments by Ibn Taymiyya, on the various ways of gaining knowledge, the different kinds of *qiyās*, categorical syllogism and analogy used in an *a fortiori* mode with reference to God, universals and particulars, seen and unseen, the meaning of *taʾwīl*, the difference between *qiyās* and *ijtihād* in law vs. theology, the ultimate equivalence of categorical syllogism and analogy, and the parallel between rational and legal sciences (310–344)

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(All items include comments by Ibn Taymiyya.)

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- B. Al-Bāqillānī on the meaning of *khalq* (creation) (103–108)
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- L. On the impossibility of a temporally originated existent coming into being without an originator (291–295)
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- B. Rational proofs establish that “every child is born on the *fiṭra*” (8 points) (456–468)
- C. On the verse “I created *jinn* and men only to worship Me” (468–494)
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- III. Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī in *Ghurar al-adilla* on rational inquiry and proofs for the existence of God, infinity and infinite sets, the temporal origination of the world, and similar (133–177)
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IX. Discussion of passages from al-Āmidī (247–251)
- A. in *Daqāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq* (247–249)
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XI. Extensive discussion of passages from Thābit b. Qurra in *Talkhīṣ mā baʿda al-ṭabīʿa*, with rebuttals (28 points total) (272–321)

XII. Return to a discussion of Ibn Rushd (321–402)
- A. in the *Manāhij* on proof for the existence of God (as illustrated in the Qurʾān) on the basis of providence (*dalīl al-ʿināya*) and creation (*dalīl al-ikhtirāʿ*) and proofs for the oneness of God (with Ibn Rushd's critique of the arguments of the *mutakallimūn* and comments by Ibn Taymiyya) (321–383)
- B. in *Ḍamīma fī masʾalat al-ʿilm* (an appendix to the *Manāhij*, on the question of knowledge) (383–402)

XIII. Discussion of Ibn Malkā (and his citation of Aristotle) in the *Muʿtabar* on the question of divine knowledge, with responses (402–441)

Volume 10

(All items include comments by Ibn Taymiyya.)

I. Ibn Malkā's citation in the *Muʿtabar* from Ibn Sīnā's *Kitāb al-Najāh*, with a rebuttal by Ibn Taymiyya (16 points) (3–36)

II. Brief passages by al-Rāzī (*Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*) and al-Āmidī (36–38)

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V. Continuation of Ibn Sīnā's discussion on the question of divine knowledge (98–133)
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VI. Al-Ghazālī on God's knowledge in the *Tahāfut* (133–141)

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VIII. Ibn Sīnā in the *Ishārāt* on God's knowing particulars in a universal manner, with al-Ṭūsī's commentary (in *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*) (159–179)

- A. Al-Ghazālī's response to Ibn Sīnā on God's knowledge of particulars in the *Tahāfut* (179–187)
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- A. in the *Manāhij* (197–251)
    1. on God's attribute of will (197–199)
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    4. in response to the Ashʿarīs and the Muʿtazila on the question of the divine attributes (225–243)
    5. on divine transcendence (*tanzīh*) (243–251)
- B. Ibn Rushd in *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* on the negation (*nafy*) of the divine attributes (251–259)
- C. Return to Ibn Rushd on the divine attributes in the *Manāhij* (259–319)

Glossary of Arabic Terms

A

ʿadam: non-existence. Opposite of *wujūd*.

maʿdūm: non-existent. Opposite of *mawjūd*.

ahl al-qibla: lit. people of the *qibla*, or direction of prayer (Mecca). Refers, essentially, to all those who associate themselves with Islam or identify themselves as Muslims (as long as they recognize the *qibla* and, by extension, the basic rites of Islam, such as the daily prayer). The term, as it is often used, is deliberately agnostic with respect to the correctness or orthodoxy of the belief or practice of those to whom it is applied. One may concede that a person or group is part of *ahl al-qibla* while nonetheless judging that person or group to be wildly heterodox or dangerously astray.

aḥwāl (sing. *ḥāl*): "states." Concept developed originally by the Muʿtazila as a theory regarding the nature of the divine attributes. Conceiving of God's qualities as "states" rather than attributes proper was meant to avoid the implication of a plurality of eternal entities alongside God. The term was later adopted into the Ashʿarī theory of attributes.

ākhira: the hereafter, in contrast to the life of this world, or *dunyā*.

ʿāmm: general, generally applicable; generic; non-specialized.

ʿāmma: the general public, common people, non-specialists. Contrasted with *khāṣṣa*.

ʿaql: reason, intellectual faculty; (pl. *ʿuqūl*) intellect, mind.

ʿaqlī: rational (said, e.g., of a science, an indicant, a proof, an objection).

ʿaqliyyāt: rational matters; rational knowledge, conclusions derived through discursive reason.

al-ṣifāt al-ʿaqliyya: see *ṣifa*

ʿaql ṣarīḥ (also *ṣarīḥ al-maʿqūl*): pure, authentic, sound natural reason. The unadulterated native human capacity for sound reasoning. Held by Ibn Taymiyya to be fully congruent with *naql ṣaḥīḥ*, or authentic revelation.

maʿqūl: intelligible (adj.); (pl. *maʿqūlāt*) intelligible (n.), object of intellection or rational apprehension.

ʿuqalāʾ (sing. *ʿāqil*): people of intellect, rational persons, rational human beings, those endowed with reason.

ʿaraḍ (pl. *aʿrāḍ*): accident (*phil.*, as opposed to substance).

ṭarīq (or *ṭarīqat*) ***al-aʿrāḍ***: see *ṭarīq*

ʿarsh: throne, particularly God's throne as mentioned in numerous verses of the Qurʾān.

aṣḥāb (sing. *ṣāḥib*): lit. companions. Refers to the direct students or immediate followers of a renowned figure.

asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā: the Most Beautiful Names of God (usually numbered at ninety-nine, drawn mostly from descriptions of God in the Qurʾān).

atbāʿ (sing. *tābiʿ*): general term referring to the followers of a renowned figure (subsequent to the generation of his direct students or immediate followers).

athar (pl. *āthār*; also *maʾthūrāt*): lit. trace, vestige. A verbal report transmitted from (*maʾthūr ʿan*) the Prophet or early generations of Muslims, typically not vetted through the mechanisms of formal *ḥadīth* criticism.

awwalī: primary, a priori.

awwaliyyāt: primary concepts, a priori premises or propositions.

ʿayn (pl. *aʿyān*): discrete, extra-mental entity; concrete entity; particular. "Concrete" here implies perceptibility, and perhaps also causal efficacy, but not necessarily materiality or corporeality.

fī al-aʿyān: existing as a discrete entity in the extra-mental world. Contrasted with *fī al-adhhān*.

muʿayyan: particular, particularized; (pl. *muʿayyanāt*) particular (n.), particular entity in the external world.

B

badīhī: self-evident, axiomatic, self-evidently true without need for inference or appeal to other evidence. Contrasted with *naẓarī*.

badīhiyyāt (also *badāʾih*, *badāʾih al-ʿuqūl*): self-evident axioms or principles of reason. Contrasted with *naẓariyyāt*.

basīṭ: simple, incomposite, not compound. Antonym of *murakkab*.

bāṭil: false, invalid; falsehood. Antonym of *ḥaqq*.

mubṭil: one who falsifies or invalidates; one who seeks to undermine something by declaring it false or invalid.

bāṭin: hidden, non-manifest; internal, inward, inner (as in *ḥiss bāṭin*, or internal perception); esoteric. Contrasted in all senses with *ẓāhir*.

Bāṭinī (pl. Bāṭiniyya): esotericist. One who claims that the revealed texts harbor a hidden, true meaning often at odds with their overt sense. Often used with specific reference to the Ismāʿīlīs.

bayān: see *mubīn*

bidʿa (pl. *bidaʿ*): a heretical innovation in religion, whether on the level of creed or practice. The direct opposite, in Ibn Taymiyya's usage, of *shirʿa*.

bidʿī: "innovated" (as a departure from normative belief and practice). Contrasted by Ibn Taymiyya with *sharʿī* (revealed, scriptural) in reference not only to inauthentic *ḥadīth* and other textually transmitted religious material but also, in the realm of reason, to faulty assumptions, premises, and arguments that lead to erroneous conclusions.

mubtadiʿ: "innovator." A purveyor of heretical innovations in religious matters.

bi-l-ḍarūra: see *ḍarūrī*

bi-l-iḍṭirār: see *bi-l-ḍarūra*, under *ḍarūrī*

bi-lā kayf: see *kayfiyya*

bi-nafsihi: see *nafs*

burhān (pl. *barāhīn*): proof; evincive proof, conclusive argument; demonstration, demonstrative proof.

D

dahriyya: lit. "eternalists." Usually translated as "materialists." Refers to the adherents of any belief that holds the material universe to be both eternal and ultimate and therefore denies the existence of a Creator.

dalīl (pl. *adilla*, *dalāʾil*): indicant, (piece of) evidence (rational or revealed); proof; argument. See also *istidlāl*.

dalāla: indication; proof value or fact of being a proof; signification, import, or meaning (of a word or expression).

madlūl: the thing indicated or proved; the thing or meaning signified by a word or expression, designatum.

ḍarūrī: necessary, immediate. Includes, for Ibn Taymiyya, any knowledge, even if inferential, that imposes itself on the mind such that the mind cannot repel or deny it once it is known.

ḍarūra (and *iḍṭirār*): necessity, immediacy, non-inferential quality (of a proposition or knowledge).

bi-l-ḍarūra (also *ḍarūratan* or *bi-l-iḍṭirār*): necessarily, by necessity; immediately, non-inferentially.

maʿlūm min al-dīn bi-l-ḍarūra: "known of necessity to be (part and parcel) of the religion." Refers to beliefs, practices, commands, and prohibitions that are so well-known and germane to the faith that no Muslim, scholar or layman, can be unaware of them.

dawr: circularity (of an argument or, e.g., of causes and effects).

dhāt: essence; (very) self or being; (pl. *dhawāt*) entity. *Dhāt* translated as "essence" can refer to a thing's quiddity, or essential qualities, as well as to the thing itself, its very being (that in which its qualities inhere). Synonymous, in all senses, with German *Wesen*.

dhātī: essential, pertaining to the essence or the very being of a thing.

dhawq: lit. tasting. Refers to the subjective experience of spiritual or other unseen realities or to the direct, intuitive apprehension of meta-rational truths; (pl. *adhwāq*) an instance of such an experience and/or the discrete knowledge acquired through it.

dhihn (pl. *adhhān*): mind; intellect.

dhihnī: mental, logical, in the mind (as opposed to externally existent; in this sense, contrasted with *khārijī*). See also *muqaddarāt dhihniyya*, under *taqdīr*.

fī al-adhhān: existing only in the mind, such as logical and mathematical principles and, according to Ibn Taymiyya, universal concepts. Contrasted with *fī al-aʿyān* or *fī al-khārij*.

dīn: religion; the religion of Islam, or submission to God; (pl. *adyān*) religion (generic). See also *maʿlūm min al-dīn bi-l-ḍarūra*, under *ḍarūrī*, and *uṣūl al-dīn*, under *uṣūl*.

dunyā: the life of this world, in contrast to the hereafter, or *ākhira*.

F

falāsifa (sing. *faylasūf*): the Muslim Peripatetic philosophers, including al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Rushd, and, most saliently, Ibn Sīnā.

fāsid: (1) invalid, unsound; (2) false, wrong; (3) foul, corrupt. In the first two senses, opposite of *ṣaḥīḥ* and, in the third, opposite of *ṣāliḥ*.

fasād: invalidity, unsoundness; falseness, wrongness; corruption. See also *mafsada*.

fī al-adhhān: see *dhihn*

fī al-aʿyān: see *ʿayn*

fī jiha: see *jiha*

fī al-khārij: see *khārijī*

fiʿl (pl. *afʿāl*): act, action.

fī makān: see *makān*

fī nafs al-amr: see *nafs*

fiqh: law, jurisprudence. See also *uṣūl al-fiqh*, under *uṣūl*.

faqīh (pl. *fuqahāʾ*): legal scholar, jurisprudent.

fitna (pl. *fitan*): discord, dissension; trial; temptation.

fiṭra: the innate or original, God-given, normative disposition of the human being; God-given natural human constitution. Ibn Taymiyya ascribes a significant role to *fiṭra* as a cognitive-moral faculty that has the ability to recognize truth from falsehood and right from wrong, and the ability to distinguish between sound and unsound rational premises.

fiṭrī: innate, normative, stemming from the original, God-given, normative human disposition.

G

ghāʾib: see *ghayb*

ghayb: a Qurʾānic term referring to the unseen realm, in contrast to the *shahāda*, or visible realm. Includes anything that lies beyond our empirical access at the current time, including past and future events in the empirical world, in addition to the ontological realm of the unseen proper, the realm of beings such as angels and *jinn* as well as God.

ghāʾib: unseen, lying beyond our current empirical access. Contrasted with *shāhid*.

ghayr maḥsūs: see *ḥiss*

ghulāh (also *ghālūn*): extremist sectarians.

H

ḥadd (pl. *ḥudūd*): definition.

ḥādith (also *muḥdath*): temporally originated, non-eternal; created. Contrasted with *qadīm*.

ḥawādith (also *muḥdathāt*): temporally originated things or events, that which has come into existence after not being.

ḥudūth**:** temporal origination, non-eternality, createdness (e.g., *ḥudūth al-ʿālam*: createdness/non-eternality of the world). Contrasted with *qidam*.

muḥdith**:** that which creates, brings about, or causes temporal things to exist (i.e., God).

ḥads**:** intuition.

ḥadsiyyāt**:** matters known by intuition.

ḥāfiẓ (pl. *ḥuffāẓ*): master of *ḥadīth*, known for the large quantity of *ḥadīth* expertly memorized. Also used to refer to someone who has memorized the entire Qurʾān.

ḥifẓ**:** memory; expert mastery of *ḥadīth* (including expert memorization of a large number thereof).

ḥāl**:** see *aḥwāl*

ḥāll (*fī*): see *ḥulūl*

ḥaqīqa (pl. *ḥaqāʾiq*): the true or essential ontological reality of an existent thing, its modality of being or *how* it exists; the "real" or literal sense of a word or expression. Contrasted in this latter sense with *majāz*.

ḥaqq**:** true, real; truth. Antonym of *bāṭil*.

al-Ḥaqq: God (the Ultimately True or Real).

ḥashwī (pl. *ḥashwiyya*): crass literalist (whose literalism leads to blatant theological anthropomorphism).

hawā (*ahwāʾ*): caprice, whim; preconceived bias, obstinate personal opinion; stubbornly clinging to a preconceived opinion in the face of countervailing evidence.

hayūlā (Greek *ὕλη/hyle*): prime matter.

ḥayyiz (pl. *aḥyāz*): the portion of space occupied by a thing possessing dimension.

mutaḥayyiz**:** occupying space; spatially extended. "Occupying space" is appropriate in the context of *kalām*, which conceives of space as existing in its own right independent of objects which then come to occupy it. "Spatially extended" is appropriate in the context of the Aristotelian conception of space as the extension of objects themselves (a conception shared by Ibn Taymiyya).

taḥayyuz**:** the fact of occupying space or being spatially extended.

ḥifẓ**:** see *ḥāfiẓ*

hijra**:** refers to the emigration of the Prophet Muḥammad and his nascent community from Mecca to Medina in the year 622 CE. The Islamic (lunar) calendar is referred to as the *hijrī* calendar because it begins in this year (i.e., AH 1 = 622 CE).

ḥiss**:** sensation, sense perception. Divided, according to Ibn Taymiyya, into an outer (*ẓāhir*) and an inner (*bāṭin*) capacity to sense.

ḥiss bāṭin: internal sensation.

ḥiss ẓāhir: external sensation, perception through the external senses.

maḥsūs: perceptible, sensible, perceivable.

ghayr maḥsūs: imperceptible, insensible, unperceivable.

ḥujja (pl. *ḥujaj*): argument; proof.

ḥukm (pl. *aḥkām*): (*logic*) judgement; proposition; qualification, predication; characteristic; (*law*) judgement; ruling.

ḥulūl (*fī*): lit. entering or being inside of; inhering in, being immanent in, indwelling; supervening in or upon. As a theological term, can be translated as "pantheism" (sometimes also as "incarnation[ism]," depending on the context). Opponents of the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (such as Ibn Taymiyya), for instance, typically charge that it entails *ḥulūl*, the notion that God is immanent in, one with, or indistinguishable from the universe.

ḥāll (*fī*): inherent or immanent (in); indwelling (in); supervening (in *or* upon).

ḥusn al-naẓar: see *naẓar*

I

iḍāfī: relational, relative (and, in this sense, synonymous with *nisbī*). Sometimes used in the more specific sense of "co-relative."

iḍmār: implicit signification; ellipsis.

iftiqār: see *muftaqir*

iḥtiyāṭ: (*law*) precaution. Exercising legal scrupulousness to avoid all possibility of falling outside the bounds of the revealed law (Sharīʿa).

ijmāʿ: consensus, juristic or scholarly consensus, communal consensus. Carries a strong sense of normativity, whether in the field of law, practice, or creed.

ijmāl: ambiguity caused by the use of equivocal language (i.e., that fails to clarify the meaning of a vague term or to distinguish between the like or overlapping meanings of a polysemous expression). Similar, in this sense, to *tashābuh*.

mujmal: vague or ambiguous (with respect to speech, a word, or an expression). Similar, in this sense, to *mutashābih* (and *mushtabih*).

ikhtilāf: difference of opinion, point of disagreement; that which distinguishes two otherwise similar things. Contrasted in this latter sense with *tashābuh* (and related terms). Latter sense also rendered by the phrase *mā bihi al-ikhtilāf*, the opposite of *mā bihi al-ishtirāk*.

ilāhiyya: see *ulūhiyya*

ilāhiyyāt: metaphysics (lit. [the science of] divine things). Primarily used in philosophical works. Largely synonymous with *mā baʿda al-ṭabīʿa*.

ilḥād: deviation, heterodoxy, heresy; disbelief; atheism.

mulḥid (pl. *malāḥida*): someone who holds a deviant or heretical position that entails a denial of fundamental tenets of the faith; disbeliever; atheist.

ʿilm: knowledge; (pl. *ʿulūm*) field of knowledge or science; *Wissenschaft*. Opposite of *jahl*.

ʿilmī: epistemic; cognitive, cognitional. More generally, "scientific," based on or having to do with *ʿilm*, or knowledge.

imkān: see *mumkin*

imtināʿ: see *mumtaniʿ*

inniyya: a thing's being or the fact *that* it is (its "thatness"), in contrast to its *māhiyya* (essence, quiddity), or *what* it is (its "whatness").

inqisām: see *munqasim*

intifāʾ: the absence or non-existence of a thing, the fact that something does not obtain or is not the case. Contrasted with *thubūt*.

intisāb: see *muntasib*

intizāʿ: abstracting, abstraction (e.g., of universal concepts from particulars). See also *tajrīd*, under *mujarrad*.

ishtibāh (and *ishtabaha*): see *tashābuh*

ishtirāk: sharing, co-sharing (as in the partaking of universals in the particulars that are instantiations of them).

qadr mushtarak: common element, common factor (in which two or more things share). Also referred to by the phrase *mā bihi al-ishtirāk*, the opposite of *mā bihi al-ikhtilāf*.

ishtirāk* (*lafẓī*) / *ishtirāk al-alfāẓ: homonymy or polysemy; equivocity.

lafẓ mushtarak: homonym or polyseme; equivocal term.

ishtirāk al-asmāʾ: equivocity of terms.

ishtirāk maʿnawī: May be translated as "analogical signification." This refers to one word being applied analogically (with the same meaning) to two things that nevertheless differ substantially in their underlying ontological reality. For example, "knowledge" with respect to both God and us means "cognition of a knowable," but it applies to God in a necessary and perfect manner while it applies to us contingently and deficiently. Ibn Taymiyya appeals to the concept of *ishtirāk maʿnawī* to preserve the comprehensibility of revealed language about God while attempting to avoid assimilationism, or *tashbīh*.

isnād (pl. *asānīd*): chain of transmission (particularly of a *ḥadīth* report).

isnād ṣaḥīḥ: an authentic chain of transmission. A *ḥadīth* with an *isnād ṣaḥīḥ* enjoys the highest level of epistemic probability, falling short only of the complete certainty (*yaqīn*) afforded by *tawātur*.

istiʿāra: metaphor. See also *majāz*.

istiʿdād: disposition, potentiality; capacity; preparedness, receptivity.

istidlāl: inference, reasoning; argumentation; deduction, demonstration. See also *dalīl*.

istighātha: lit. entreating for help. Refers to the practice of beseeching the Prophet Muḥammad or a deceased pious figure after him (see *walī*) to intercede on one's behalf with God for the fulfillment of one's need. Though permitted by some scholars, Ibn Taymiyya condemned *istighātha* (and the related practice of *tawassul*) as a violation of the principle of *tawḥīd*.

istiḥsān: juristic preference. A method of legal reasoning in which the ruling engendered by a strict analogy (*qiyās*) is set aside in favor of an alternative ruling judged preferable on the basis of a relevant text, consensus, or necessity.

iṣṭilāḥ: technical usage; (pl. *iṣṭilāḥāt*) (also *muṣṭalaḥ*, pl. *muṣṭalaḥāt*) technical term.

iṣṭilāḥī: technical (said of a term, meaning, or usage).

istiṣḥāb (also *istiṣḥāb al-ḥāl*): (*law*) presumption of continuity, whereby a previously existing state is presumed to continue in the present unless the contrary is established. For example, inheritance may not be claimed from a missing person until it is proved that he is dead (as his previous living state is presumed still to obtain until the establishment of positive evidence to the contrary).

istiṣlāḥ: (*law*) Refers to the consideration of benefit, or *maṣlaḥa*, in deciding the legal status (whether permitted or prohibited) of a thing or an action, particularly in cases not covered by the Qurʾān, Sunna, or juristic consensus (*ijmāʿ*).

maṣlaḥa mursala: textually unattested benefit. Refers, in the context of *istiṣlāḥ*, to the consideration of benefits that are not explicitly indicated in the Qurʾān or Sunna.

istiwāʾ: settling; sitting, being seated. Used specifically in reference to God's "settling on the throne" (*al-istiwāʾ ʿalā al-ʿarsh*). Whether God's *istiwāʾ* should be understood literally or interpreted figuratively through *taʾwīl* was a major point of contention among various schools of theology.

ithbāt: affirmation, specifically of the divine attributes; affirmationism (as a doctrine affirming the reality of the divine attributes). Contrasted with *nafy*, *taʿṭīl*, and *tajahhum*.

muthbita (also *muthbitūn*): "affirmationists." Those who affirm the reality of the divine attributes. Contrasted with *nufāh*, *muʿaṭṭila*, and *jahmiyya*.

iʿtibārī: notional; mentally considered, posited in the mind (as opposed to something that exists externally, irrespective of our mental consideration of it).

iʿtibār: mental consideration, notion, being of reason (*ens rationis*).

J

jadal: dialectic; argumentation, controversy.

jahl (also *jahāla*): ignorance; not knowing. Opposite of *ʿilm*. The Qurʾān associates faith (*īmān*) with knowledge, while contrasting this latter only to ignorance (and not, e.g., to belief).

Jāhiliyya: the Age of Ignorance (in reference to the period of idolatry and iniquity prior to the advent of Islam).

jahmī (pl. *jahmiyya*): "negationist." One who denies the reality of the divine attributes. The name is derived from Jahm b. Ṣafwān. *Jahmiyya* is largely synonymous with *nufāh* or *muʿaṭṭila*, but carries a stronger polemical charge. Contrasted with *muthbita*.

tajahhum: the doctrine of the *jahmiyya*, negationism. Adopting a doctrine that entails denying the reality of the divine attributes. Synonymous with *nafy* and *taʿṭīl*. Contrasted with *ithbāt*.

jawāz: possibility; permissibility.

jāʾiz: possible; permissible.

jawhar (pl. *jawāhir*): substance; atom (in the context of *kalām*).

jawāhir maʿqūla: intelligible substances.

jiha (pl. *jihāt*): lit. direction; (*tech.*) directionality or spatial location.

fī jiha: lit. in a direction; (*tech.*) spatially located, referring to a thing's being in a (particular) direction vis-à-vis other objects such that it can be pointed to as being *here* or *there*. Occurs in the theological debate regarding whether God is spatially located (*fī jiha*) with respect to creation (and whether we can, therefore, point to Him as being literally "up there" with respect to the world).

jism (pl. *ajsām*): body.

tajsīm: corporealism (a subset of *tashbīh*). Attributing a body or corporeal properties to God. See also *tashbīh*.

mujassim: corporealist, one who attributes a body or corporeal properties to God.

jumhūr (pl. *jamāhīr*): the majority, large majority (e.g., of scholars who hold a particular view); the masses, the common people.

juzʾī: particular, a particular. Contrasted with *kullī*, referring to a universal.

juzʾ (*ajzāʾ*): part.

K

kadhib: falsehood (incl. of an assertion or proposition); lying, mendacity.

makdhūb: fabricated (said especially of a forged or unsound *ḥadīth* report).

kalām: speech, discourse; discursive or rational theology.

mutakallim (pl. *mutakallimūn*): speaker; theologian (specifically one who engages in systematic discursive theology).

kashf: unveiling, spiritual unveiling. See also *mushāhada*.

kayfiyya (also *kayf*): the modality or qualitative reality of a thing's existence, its "how."

bi-lā kayf: the theological position of affirming seemingly anthropomorphic attributes of God mentioned in revelation, negating their similarity to human attributes but refraining from inquiry into their precise nature or modality.

khabar (pl. *akhbār*): report; instance of reporting. Can also refer, in a general sense, to revelation (in consideration of the fact that it reaches us, ultimately, by way of verbal reports or transmission).

al-ṣifāt al-khabariyya: see *ṣifa*

khalaf: the later scholars. Juxtaposed to the Salaf, or early normative forebears.

khārijī (also *fī al-khārij*): externally existent, existing in the world outside the mind. Contrasted with *dhihnī* (mental, logical) or *fī al-adhhān*.

khāṣṣa: specialists (in contrast to the *ʿāmma*, the non-specialist general public); the elite.

kullī: universal. Contrasted with *juzʾī*, referring to a particular.

kulliyyāt: universals, universal concepts.

kulliyyāt mujarrada: abstract(ed) universals. Those universal concepts abstracted by the mind from extant particulars.

kunh: quintessential nature, inner core or essence.

kursī: God's "footstool," mentioned in the Qurʾān in addition to the divine throne, or *ʿarsh*.

L

lafẓ (pl. *alfāẓ*): (1) utterance; (2) word, term, expression, vocable; (3) verbal form, wording, language; (4) (also *talaffuẓ*) verbalization, verbal recitation, vocal pronunciation (of the Qurʾānic text). Contrasted, in sense (3), with *maʿnā*.

lafẓ mushtarak: see *ishtirāk*

lāzim: (*li*) concomitant to, entailed or implied by; (pl. *lawāzim*) concomitant (n.); consequent (n.); (logical) consequence, implication.

talāzum: mutual concomitance, mutual entailment, mutual implication.

mutalāzim(ān): mutually concomitant, mutually entailing, mutually implied.

M

mā baʿda al-ṭabīʿa: metaphysics (lit. what is beyond ['meta'] nature [or physics]). Primarily used in philosophical works. Largely synonymous with *ilāhiyyāt*.

mā bihi al-ikhtilāf: see *ikhtilāf*

mā bihi al-ishtirāk: see *ishtirāk*

madhhab (pl. *madhāhib*): school, school of thought (especially legal); doctrine, position, teaching (of a person or school).

madlūl: see *dalīl*

maʿdūm: see *ʿadam*

mafhūm: sense, meaning, signification; linguistic implication, implied meaning; (pl. *mafāhīm*) concept.

mafsada (pl. *mafāsid*): detriment. Opposite of *maṣlaḥa*. See also *fasād*, under *fāsid*.

māhiyya: essence, quiddity. *What* a thing is (its "whatness") as opposed to *that* it is (its *inniyya*, or "thatness").

maḥsūs: see *ḥiss*

majāz: non-literal or figurative meaning of a word or expression, in contrast to its *ḥaqīqa* ("real" or literal) sense. Often translated by the more specific term "metaphor," which is, more properly speaking, *istiʿāra*.

makān (pl. *amkina*, *amākin*): place.

fī makān: subject or confined to place; existing in a (specific) place

makdhūb: see *kadhib*

maʿnā (pl. *maʿānī*): (1) meaning, signification; (2) notion, concept, intentional object; (3) quality, property; (4) entity. Often contrasted, in the first sense, with *lafẓ*.

ṣifāt al-maʿānī: see *ṣifa*

al-ṣifāt al-maʿnawiyya: see *ṣifa*

maqāṣid (sing. *maqṣid*): aims, intentions, objectives; higher objectives or purposes (of the revealed law, or Sharīʿa).

maʿqūl: see *ʿaql*

maʿrifa (pl. *maʿārif*): knowledge; cognizance, cognition. Also, experiential knowledge or the knowledge of familiarity, in contrast to knowledge of a propositional kind (similar to French *connaître* vs. *savoir*, German *kennen* vs. *wissen*, or Persian *shenākhtan* vs. *dānestan*). Can therefore refer by extension to spiritual gnosis, or direct, experiential knowledge of God.

marjūḥ: non-preponderant (in reference to the non-literal meaning of a word in contrast to its primary or obvious sense); less probative, of lesser probative value (in reference to the weaker of two positions, arguments, or pieces of evidence). Contrasted in both senses with *rājiḥ*. See also *tarjīḥ*.

maṣlaḥa (pl. *maṣāliḥ*): benefit (personal or public); interest, good; common good. The promotion of *maṣlaḥa* among the general public, as opposed to purveying knowledge of ultimate truth, is considered by the philosophers to be the main purpose and value of revealed religion. Opposite of *mafsada*.

maṣlaḥa mursala: see *istiṣlāḥ*

mathal (pl. *amthāl*): parable (such as the *amthāl* mentioned in the Qurʾān), allegory; analog; likeness or similitude.

tamthīl: the use of parable or allegory, allegorization; analogy; likening or striking a similitude.

maʾthūr and ***maʾthūrāt***: see *athar*

matn (pl. *mutūn*): the text of *ḥadīth*, as opposed to its *isnād*, or chain of transmission.

mawjūd: see *wujūd*

mawqūf : contingent (*ʿalā*, on).

mawṣūf : see *ṣifa*

milla (pl. *milal*): religion, religious community.

miqdār: measure; quantity; dimension; magnitude, volume, spatial expanse.

mirāʾ: disputation, disputatiousness.

mirya: doubt.

al-mīthāq: the "primordial covenant," referenced in Q. *al-Aʿrāf* 7:172, in which God caused all human souls ever to be to bear witness against themselves that He is their Lord.

muʿaṭṭila: see *taʿṭīl*

muʾawwal: see *taʾwīl*

muʿayyan: see *ʿayn*

mubāyana: being distinct and separate from, particularly with respect to God's distinction and separateness from creation.

mubāyin: distinct and separate (*li*, from), especially of God with respect to creation.

mubīn: clear, manifest (particularly with respect to the meaning of revelation).

bayān: clarity (particularly of the meaning of revelation); (also *tibyān*) elucidation, clarification.

muftaqir (*ilā*): lit. in want or need (of); (*tech.*) ontologically dependent (on).

iftiqār: lit. want, need; (*tech.*) ontological dependence (of one entity on another). More literally, the ontological "poverty" of one thing in relation to another, as in the case, for instance, of creation in relation to God.

muḥāyith: co-located, occupying the same space or location.

muḥdath: see *ḥādith*

muḥdith: see *ḥādith*

muḥkam: lit. firmly established, solid; (*tech.*) determinate (in meaning). A Qurʾānic term often translated as "clear" or "unambiguous" in reference to verses that are understood to be determinate in meaning and meant in a literal sense (and, hence, not open to figurative interpretation through *taʾwīl*). Contrasted with *mutashābih*.

mujarrabāt: experiential matters, matters known through observation or experience (such as astronomy).

mujarrad: abstract; abstracted from matter or from particulars.

tajrīd: abstraction (as in *tajrīd al-kulliyyāt ʿan al-muʿayyanāt*, or the abstraction of universals from particulars; also *tajrīd al-rūḥ ʿan al-badan*, referring to the "abstraction" or dissociation of the soul from the body upon death). Sometimes rendered as *intizāʿ*.

kulliyyāt mujarrada: see *kullī*

mujassim: see *jism*

mujmal: see *ijmāl*

mulḥid: see *ilḥād*

mumāthala: similarity or likeness. Synonymous with *mushābaha*.

tamthīl: likening or assimilating God to created beings (synonymous in this sense with *tashbīh*). Also, allegory.

mumkin: possible (as opposed to impossible), contingent (as opposed to necessary). Contrasted with *mumtaniʿ* (impossible) and *wājib* (necessary).

imkān: possibility, contingency.

mumtaniʿ: impossible. Contrasted with *mumkin* (possible, contingent) and *wājib* (necessary).

imtināʿ: impossibility.

munqasim: divisible.

inqisām: divisibility.

muntasib (*ilā*): someone affiliated or associated (with) (e.g., a doctrine, religion, school of thought, scholarly authority).

intisāb (*ilā*): affiliation or association (with) (e.g., a doctrine, religion, school of thought, scholarly authority).

muqaddarāt dhihniyya: see *taqdīr*

muqallid: see *taqlīd*

murād: meaning, intended meaning (of speech or a speaker); intention or objective.

murajjiḥ: see *tarjīḥ*

murakkab: see *tarkīb*

musammā (pl. *musammayāt*): nominatum, the object or concept to which a noun (*ism*) refers.

mushābaha: see *tashābuh*

mushabbih: see *tashbīh*

mushāhada: that which is observed; spiritual witnessing, direct witnessing of unseen realities (through *kashf*, or spiritual unveiling).

mushakhkhaṣ: individuated.

tashkhīṣ: individuation.

mushtarak: see *ishtirāk*

muta'akhkhirūn: the later authorities of a pursuit or discipline. In the context of Ashʿarī *kalām*, "*al-muta'akhkhirūn*" refers to the generations following (and possibly including) al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). Contrasted with *mutaqaddimūn*.

mutaḥayyiz: see *ḥayyiz*

mutakallim: see *kalām*

mutalāzim(ān): see *lāzim*

mutaqaddimūn: the early authorities of a pursuit or discipline. In the context of Ashʿarī *kalām*, "*al-mutaqaddimūn*" refers to al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935 or 936) and the first several generations after him, up to (and possibly including) al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). Contrasted with *muta'akhkhirūn*.

mutaṣawwar: see *taṣawwur*

mutashābih and ***mushtabih***: see *tashābuh*

mutawātir: see *tawātur*

muthbita (and *muthbitūn*): see *ithbāt*

muṭlaq: absolute; unconditioned (specifically in reference to a universal concept considered apart from any particularizing factors).

N

nafs: (pl. *anfus*) self; (pl. *nufūs*) soul.

al-nafs al-nāṭiqa: the rational soul.

nafsī: essential, proper to the very being of a thing.

ṣifa nafsiyya: see *ṣifa*

bi-nafsihi: by virtue of itself (as in *wājib bi-nafsihi*, or necessary by virtue of itself). See also *qāʾim bi-nafsihi*, under *qāʾim*.

fī nafs al-amr: in and of itself, intrinsically.

nafy: negation, specifically of the divine attributes; negationism (as a doctrine that entails negating or also, for Ibn Taymiyya, reinterpreting figuratively through *taʾwīl*) some or all of the divine attributes in order to avoid *tashbīh*. Largely synonymous with *taʿṭīl* or *tajahhum*. Contrasted with *ithbāt*, or affirmationism.

nufāh: "negationists." Those who deny the reality of the divine attributes (or also, for Ibn Taymiyya, reinterpret them figuratively through *taʾwīl*). Often used interchangeably with *muʿaṭṭila* or *jahmiyya*. Contrasted with *muthbita*.

naql: lit. transmission. Refers in the *Darʾ* primarily to revelation, consisting of the (transmitted) texts of the Qurʾān and authenticated prophetic *ḥadīth*. Largely synonymous with *samʿ* and with *sharʿ*.

naqlī: revelational, scriptural. Largely synonymous with *samʿī* and *sharʿī*.

naql ṣaḥīḥ (also *ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl*): authentic divine revelation, as preserved and transmitted in the form of the Qurʾān and the body of authenticated prophetic *ḥadīth*. Held by Ibn Taymiyya to be fully congruent with *ʿaql ṣarīḥ*, or pure, authentic, sound natural reason.

naẓar: discursive reasoning, rational or discursive inference; rational inquiry.

naẓarī: discursive, inferential (in contrast to *badīhī*); theoretical (as in *al-ʿaql al-naẓarī*: theoretical reason).

naẓariyyāt: propositions or knowledge derived through discursive inference or other rational inquiry. Contrasted with *badīhiyyāt*.

ḥusn al-naẓar (also *naẓar ḥasan*): sound reasoning, sound rational inference. The conclusions of *ḥusn al-naẓar*, according to Ibn Taymiyya, are always found to be in accord with revealed knowledge.

nuẓẓār: translated as "rationalists." Refers to those who engage in systematic discursive reasoning, especially in the realm of theology. Normally used by Ibn Taymiyya in reference to rationalistically inclined *mutakallimūn* like al-Rāzī.

nisbī: relational, relative. Often synonymous with *iḍāfī*.

Q

qāḍī (pl. *quḍāh*): judge.

qāḍī al-quḍāh: chief justice (lit. judge of judges).

qadīm: eternal, beginningless, pre-eternally existent. Contrasted with *ḥādith* (or *muḥdath*).

qidam: eternality, beginninglessness, pre-eternal existence. Contrasted with *ḥudūth*.

qadr mushtarak: see *ishtirāk*

qāʿida (pl. *qawāʿid*): term used by Ibn Taymiyya to refer to a treatise (such as *al-Qāʿida al-Murrākushiyya*). Otherwise means *rule; base, basis*.

qāʾim: subsisting, subsistent (*bi*, in).

qāʾim bi-nafsihi (or *bi-dhātihi*, pl. *qāʾima bi-anfusihā/bi-dhātihā*): self-subsisting, existing by virtue of itself (said of God); self-standing (said of other entities), independent, existing as a discrete entity independent of other things (in contrast, e.g., to a concept, which subsists in the mind, or an attribute, which subsists in a substance or entity). Etymologically parallel and semantically equivalent to German *selbständig*.

qāma bi: to subsist in (as attributes in a substance or entity).

qalb (pl. *qulūb*): heart; also, mind. Considered a primary seat of cognition, involved in both discursive reasoning and primary rational intuition as well as the moral-cum-cognitive intuitions grounded in *fiṭra*.

al-qānūn al-kullī (also *qānūn al-taʾwīl*): the "universal rule" of the later theologians for reinterpreting figuratively or suspending judgement on the meaning of scripture when it is found to conflict with reason.

qānūn al-taʾwīl: see *al-qānūn al-kullī*

qarāʾin (sing. *qarīna*): circumstantial or contextual evidence; context (by which to understand the meaning of a linguistic utterance). In this latter sense, synonymous with *siyāq*/*siyāq al-kalām*.

qarāʾin maʿnawiyya: the non-verbal context of an utterance (indispensable, according to Ibn Taymiyya, for determining the meaning of a word in any given instance of verbal communication).

qarn (pl. *qurūn*): generation. For Ibn Taymiyya, the term "Salaf" refers to the first three generations (*qurūn*) of Muslims, namely, the Prophet's Companions (*ṣaḥāba*), the Successors (*tābiʿūn*), and the Successors of the Successors (*tābiʿū al-tābiʿīn*).

qasīm (pl. *aqsimāʾ*, *qasāʾim*, *qusamāʾ*): counterpart.

qaṭʿī: definitive, conclusive (said of an argument, piece of evidence, or other indicant of knowledge). Contrasted with *ẓannī*.

qaṭʿ: definitiveness, conclusiveness. Contrasted with *ẓann*.

qaṭʿiyyāt (also *qawāṭiʿ*): definitive matters, propositions of conclusive certainty. Contrasted with *ẓanniyyāt*.

qawl (pl. *aqwāl*, *aqāwīl* [pej.]): statement; position, doctrine.

al-qāʾilūna bi …: those who hold the position/adhere to the doctrine of …

qidam: see *qadīm*

qiyās (sometimes pluralized as *maqāyīs*): analogy, legal analogy, analogical inference; syllogism, syllogistic demonstration; (occasionally) rational inference more generally.

qiyās al-khalf: indirect proof or syllogism (a species of proof by contradiction). Involves assuming the opposite of a proposition *p*, showing that $\neg p$ leads to a contradiction, and therefore concluding *p*. Converse of the *reductio ad absurdum*, which starts by assuming a proposition *p*, then shows that *p* leads to a contradiction or absurdity and therefore concludes –*p*.

***al-qiyās al-mustaqīm*:** (when contrasted with *qiyās al-khalf*) direct proof or syllogism, i.e., the standard form of the syllogism that draws a direct inference from premises to conclusion (as opposed to establishing a conclusion based on the absurdity or contradictoriness of its opposite).

***qiyās al-tamthīl*:** analogy, legal analogy; analogical syllogism. Otherwise known simply as *qiyās*. The term *qiyās al-tamthīl* seems to be specific to Ibn Taymiyya, who was keen to make the point that analogy, proceeding from particular to particular, and the syllogism, proceeding from universal to particular, are essentially equivalent, the one readily being converted into the other. Juxtaposed with *qiyās al-shumūl*.

***qiyās al-shumūl*:** Ibn Taymiyya's term for a categorical syllogism, which he juxtaposes with *qiyās al-tamthīl*.

qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid (also *al-qiyās bi-l-shāhid ʿalā al-ghāʾib*): drawing an analogy between the seen and the unseen realms, drawing an inference or transferring a judgement from the seen to the unseen.

quwwa (pl. *quwā*): potency, potentiality; capacity; faculty (as in *al-quwwa al-ʿāqila*: the rational faculty).

***bi-l-quwwa*:** potential, potentially, *in potentia*.

***bi-l-fiʿl*:** actual, actually, *in actu*.

R

***rājiḥ*:** preponderant (in reference to the primary or most obvious meaning of a word); more probative, of greater probative weight (in reference to the stronger of two positions, arguments, or pieces of evidence). Contrasted in both senses with *marjūḥ*. See also *tarjīḥ*.

***raʾy*:** reasoned or considered opinion. As a technical term, refers specifically to earlier, less formalized methods of legal reasoning.

rūḥ (pl. *arwāḥ*): spirit, soul.

***ruʾya*:** seeing, vision. Specifically, the beatific vision, or seeing of God in the hereafter.

S

ṣaḥāba (sing. *ṣaḥābī*): the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad.

***ṣaḥīḥ*:** correct; valid, sound (as opposed to *fāsid*); authentic (said, e.g., of a transmitted text, specifically a text of revelation). See also *naql ṣaḥīḥ* and *ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl*, under *naql*.

***sajʿ*:** rhymed prose.

Salaf (also *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*): the normative early community, pious forebears. Confined, for Ibn Taymiyya, to the first three generations of Muslims, those of the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*), the Successors (*tābiʿūn*), and the Successors of the Successors (*tābiʿū al-tābiʿīn*). Juxtaposed with the *khalaf*, or later scholars.

salb: negation; stripping away.

al-ṣifāt al-salbiyya: see *ṣifa*

ṣāliḥ: good, right; wholesome, healthful; righteous. Opposite of *fāsid*.

samʿ (also *samāʿ*): hearing, sense of hearing; revelation (in consideration of the fact that it comes to us, in the first instance, through our *hearing* of the revealed text of the Qurʾān and the prophetic *ḥadīth*). Nearly synonymous in this latter sense with *naql* (lit. "transmission") as well as with *sharʿ*.

samʿī: revealed, revelational, scriptural. Largely synonymous in this sense with *naqlī* and *sharʿī*.

samʿiyyāt: a term referring collectively to the revealed texts (which have come to us by way of "hearing"), namely, the Qurʾān and the body of authenticated prophetic *ḥadīth*.

samāʿ: see *samʿ*

al-Ṣāniʿ: the Maker, the Creator, God. Non-Qurʾānic term used, however, by both philosophers and theologians alike.

ṣarīḥ: pure, unadulterated, clear. See also *ʿaql ṣarīḥ* and *ṣarīḥ al-maʿqūl*, under *ʿaql*.

shabīh: see *tashābuh*

shahāda: a Qurʾānic term referring to the visible or seen realm to which we have customary empirical access, contrasted with the habitually unseen realm, or *ghayb*.

shāhid: seen, visible; existing in the realm to which we have empirical access. Contrasted with *ghāʾib*.

shakk (pl. *shukūk*): doubt.

sharʿ: lit. revealed law, *lex*. Also commonly used as a synonym of *dīn* with reference to the religion as a whole. Can also refer to revelation specifically, which is the most common usage of the term in the *Darʾ*. Synonymous in this latter sense with *naql* and *samʿ*.

sharʿī: revealed, revelational, prescribed by or known on the basis of revelation. Often synonymous with *naqlī* and *samʿī*. Frequently contrasted with *ʿaqlī* (rational), but set by Ibn Taymiyya in contrast to *bidʿī* (innovated) instead.

sharīʿa (pl. *sharāʾiʿ*): revealed law; normative law of a (religious) community. Can also refer, in some contexts, to religion, or revealed religion, more generally. Largely synonymous with *shirʿa*.

Sharīʿa: the revealed law of Islam.

sharāʾiʿ [also]: religious practices; (religious) laws, ordinances; religious teachings or precepts.

shirʿa: revelation, scripture; scriptural or revealed religion. Largely synonymous with *sharīʿa*. Also refers, in Ibn Taymiyya's usage, to that which is scripturally or religiously legitimated or approved. In this latter sense, the direct opposite of *bidʿa*.

shirk: idolatry, polytheism, paganism.

shubha (pl. *shubuhāt*, *shubah*): specious objection or counterargument; doubt or confusion; point of doubt or confusion (caused by specious objections or counterarguments raised against a doctrine, belief, or other affirmation).

ṣifa (pl. *ṣifāt*): attribute, quality.

mawṣūf: the entity qualified by an attribute or quality.

al-ṣifa al-nafsiyya: "attribute of the essence." That which defines or describes what a thing is in itself without any additional qualification. In the case of God, this attribute is existence itself.

al-ṣifāt al-salbiyya: attributes of negation (often called "negative attributes"). Attributes that negate the ascription of a quality to the entity in question. God's oneness, for example, is a negation of multiplicity; His self-sufficiency is a negation of need; His eternality is the negation of a beginning or end to His existence; etc.

ṣifāt al-maʿānī: real, or "entitative," attributes. Specifically, God's attributes, such as life, knowledge, power, and will, considered as real entities (*maʿānī*) subsisting in His essence.

al-ṣifāt al-maʿnawiyya: predicative attributes, or attributes of predication. Namely, the qualifications entailed by the presence of the real attributes (such as God's "being powerful," a *ṣifa maʿnawiyya* entailed by His real attribute of power).

al-ṣifāt al-ʿaqliyya: rational attributes. Those divine attributes that can be known through reason independently of revelation, such as God's existence, eternality, oneness, life, knowledge, power, and will.

al-ṣifāt al-khabariyya: revealed attributes. Refers to those divine attributes that cannot be derived through reason but can only be known on the basis of revelation. Often refers specifically to those revealed attributes that lay at the center of the controversy over *tashbīh* and *taʾwīl*, such as God's hands, eyes, face, or settling on the throne.

siyāq (also *siyāq al-kalām*): context (i.e., in light of which the meaning of a linguistic utterance is understood). Synonymous in this sense with *qarīna/qarāʾin*.

sūra (pl. *suwar*): chapter of the Qurʾān (as in *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*, the Chapter of Women).

ṣūra (pl. *ṣuwar*): form; image.

T

tabādur (***ilā al-dhihn***): occurring first (to the mind). Said of that meaning, among several meanings of a polysemous word, that first comes to mind upon hearing the term outside a particular context.

tabdīl: alteration (of meaning). Term used by Ibn Taymiyya in reference to two subcategories of altering the meaning of revelation in the face of an alleged rational contradiction, namely, *al-wahm wa-l-takhyīl* (see *wahm*) and *al-taḥrīf wa-l-taʾwīl* (see *taḥrīf*).

tābiʿūn (sing. *tābiʿī*): the Successors (i.e., the generation immediately following that of the Prophet and his Companions).

tābiʿū al-tābiʿīn (also *atbāʿ al-tābiʿīn*): the Successors of the Successors (i.e., the second generation after that of the Prophet and his Companions).

tafrīq: disseverance, disassembling, taking apart.

tafsīr: Qurʾānic exegesis.

tafwīḍ: lit. consigning, entrusting. Suspension of meaning, that is, denying the literal meaning of a Qurʾānic verse or *ḥadīth* taken to entail anthropomorphism but consigning or entrusting ("*tafwīḍ*") its true meaning to God rather than proffering a particular figurative interpretation through *taʾwīl*.

taḥayyuz: see *ḥayyiz*

taḥrīf: alteration, change; distortion.

al-taḥrīf wa-l-taʾwīl (rendered as "*taḥrīf* and *taʾwīl*"): term used by Ibn Taymiyya to denote the philosophers' and theologians' use of what he considers unjustified figurative interpretation of revelation in the face of an alleged rational contradiction.

ṭāʾifa (pl. *ṭawāʾif*): faction (political or ideological, including in reference to religious creeds or sects).

tajahhum: see *jahmī*

tajrīd: see *mujarrad*

tajsīm: see *jism*

takāfuʾ al-adilla: equivalence, or equipollence, of proofs. The fact of two or more proofs or arguments for different positions appearing to have equal probative weight, resulting in an inability to decide the matter at hand.

takalluf: unnaturalness of manner, unnatural strain and affectation.

takhṣīṣ: particularization (of a general, or *ʿāmm*, lexical term or legal ruling); God's act of determining or specifying the particular attributes of a thing, including the thing's very instantiation through "specifying" it with the attribute or quality of existence over that of non-existence.

takhyīl: "imaginalization" or imaginative evocation. Refers to the philosophers' doctrine that statements in revelation pertaining to, e.g., the afterlife are not literally true but only imaginative representations of abstract realities that lie beyond the grasp of non-philosophers. See also *al-wahm wa-l-takhyīl*, under *wahm*.

talāzum: see *lāzim*

tamthīl: see *mathal* and *mumāthala*

tanzīh: God's incomparability or radical dissimilarity to any created thing; affirming God's incomparability or dissimilarity by declaring Him free of ("*tanzīh*") creaturely attributes. Often translated as "transcendence," which entails that God is wholly beyond and independent of the material universe or any characteristics thereof. Contrasted (positively) with *tashbīh*.

taqdīr: supposition, assumption, hypothesis.

muqaddarāt dhihniyya: mental hypotheses; suppositions, hypotheticals. Objects, relations, or states of affairs hypothesized by the mind, without regard to the possibility of their existence in the external world.

taqlīd: imitation, blind imitation; (*law*) legal conformism. Following a position or opinion on the basis of authority. In theology, this refers to belief in God absent any rational reflection whatsoever, resulting (for most theologians) in an absence of valid belief. Upon the perception of basic rational reasons for believing in God, a person ceases to be a *muqallid*. In law, a person may practice *taqlīd* either with or without possessing knowledge of the underlying evidence in support of the legal doctrines of one's school.

muqallid: an "imitator," someone who practices *taqlīd*.

ṭarīq (and *ṭarīqa*, pl. *ṭuruq*): method, way; also, argument.

ṭarīq (or *ṭarīqat*) ***al-aʿrāḍ***: the way/method of proving the existence of God from the temporal origination of accidents or, more simply, the argument from accidents. See also *ʿaraḍ*.

tarjīḥ: (*linguistic*) determination of the preponderant, or dominant, meaning of a polysemous word (see also *rājiḥ* and *marjūḥ*); (*ontological*) selection (and instantiation) of a specific quality or state from a potentially infinite set of possibilities. A thing only is, for example, because its existence has been selected and instantiated, through *tarjīḥ*, over its non-existence.

murajjiḥ: that which selects and instantiates a specific quality or state from a potentially infinite set of possibilities. In a theological context, God is the ultimate *murajjiḥ* as sufficient cause for the existence and particular characteristics of the universe and all that it contains.

tarkīb: composition, compositeness.

murakkab: composed, composite. Antonym of *basīṭ*.

tasalsul: infinite regress.

tasalsul al-ʿilal (or *al-tasalsul fī al-ʿilal*): infinite regress of causes, infinite causal regress.

tasalsul al-āthār (or *al-tasalsul fī al-āthār*): infinite regress of effects.

tasalsul al-fāʿilīn (or *al-tasalsul fī al-fāʿilīn*): infinite regress of agents.

tasalsul al-shurūṭ (or *al-tasalsul fī al-shurūṭ*): infinite regress of conditions (as opposed to strict causes, or *ʿilal*).

tasalsul al-ḥawādith (or *al-tasalsul fī al-ḥawādith*): infinite regress of (temporally originated) events.

tasalsul al-ḥarakāt (or *al-tasalsul fī al-ḥarakāt*): infinite regress of motions.

taṣawwuf: Sufism; Islamic mysticism. More generally, purification of the heart and actions through spiritual and moral discipline of the soul. Synonymous, in this latter sense, with *tazkiya*.

taṣawwur (pl. *taṣawwurāt*): conception, conceptualization.

mutaṣawwar: conceived, conceptualized (as in *mutaṣawwar fī al-dhihn*: conceived of or conceptualized in/by the mind).

taṣdīq: assent (*logic*); (pl. *taṣdīqāt*) assertion, judgement; proposition.

tashābuh (and *ishtibāh*): (1) (also *mushābaha*) similarity or likeness; (2) ambiguity caused by the use of equivocal language (i.e., that fails to clarify the meaning of a vague term or to distinguish between the like or overlapping meanings of a polysemous expression); (3) indeterminacy (in meaning). Contrasted in the first sense with *ikhtilāf*. Similar in the second sense to *ijmāl*.

tashābaha (and *ishtabaha*): (1) to be alike or similar; (2) to be vague, ambiguous, equivocal (said of speech, a word, or an expression); (3) to be indeterminate (in meaning).

mutashābih (and *mushtabih*): (1) (also *mushābih*) similar, like; (2) vague or ambiguous (with respect to speech, a word, or an expression). Similar in this sense to *mujmal*; (3) indeterminate (in meaning). Often translated, in this last sense, as "figurative" or "metaphorical" with respect to Qurʾānic verses whose literal meaning is understood to entail *tashbīh* and that must therefore be interpreted figuratively through *taʾwīl*. Contrasted, in the first sense, with *mukhtalif* and, in the second and third senses, with *muḥkam*.

shabīh: like, likeness (of).

tashbīh: "assimilationism." The ascription to God of attributes shared by created beings in a way that fails to uphold His utter dissimilarity to material or temporal entities (synonymous in this sense with *tamthīl*). A particularly offensive form of *tashbīh* is *tajsīm*, or corporealism. Contrasted (negatively) with *tanzīh*.

mushabbih: "assimilator." Someone who ascribes material, temporal, or other creature-like qualities to God. Sometimes translated as "anthropomorphist," though this is too narrow as *tashbīh* includes the likening of God to *any* created entity, not just human beings.

tashkhīṣ: see *mushakhkhaṣ*

taʿṭīl: lit. nullification. Refers, in a theological context, to the denial (especially the comprehensive denial) of the reality of the divine attributes. Largely synonymous with *nafy* or *tajahhum*. Contrasted with *ithbāt*.

muʿaṭṭila: those who "annul" or deny the reality of the divine attributes. Largely synonymous with *nufāh* and *jahmiyya*. Contrasted with *muthbita*.

tawassul: lit. taking means or seeking an intermediary. Refers to the practice of supplicating God through (or by the intermediation of) the Prophet Muḥammad or a deceased pious figure after him (see *walī*). This typically involves mentioning the righteous person's name and/or rank while petitioning God for one's need. Though permitted by the majority of classical scholars, Ibn Taymiyya condemned this type of *tawassul* (and the related practice of *istighātha*) as a violation of the principle of *tawḥīd*.

tawāṭuʾ: collusion or conscious agreement. Used specifically in the definition of *tawātur*, where a report is considered *mutawātir* if, at every level of transmission, it has been conveyed by a number of people so large and disparate as to preclude the possibility of their having colluded or consciously agreed on a forgery.

tawātur: recurrent mass transmission of a report, beginning at its origin, on such a wide scale as to preclude the possibility of collusion or conscious agreement on a forgery. Normally applies to the domain of transmitted verbal reports (especially *ḥadīth*), but Ibn Taymiyya expands the concept of *tawātur* significantly to make it the final guarantor of his entire epistemic system.

mutawātir: recurrently mass transmitted on such a wide scale as to preclude the possibility of collusion or conscious agreement on a forgery.

tawḥīd: oneness of God, divine unicity; affirming the existence of one, singular God with no plurality; monotheism. Ibn Taymiyya distinguishes three subcategories of *tawḥīd*: (1) *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*, or the "oneness of lordship," referring to God's status as sole Creator, Master, and Sustainer of the universe; (2) *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*, or the "oneness of divinity or Godhood," referring to God's worthiness of being worshipped, loved, and obeyed for His sake, alone and without partner; and (3) *tawḥīd al-asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt*, or the "oneness of names and attributes," referring to the fact that God's divine names and attributes are solely and uniquely His and are not shared in or partaken of by any creature.

taʾwīl: a Qurʾānic term meaning explication or elucidation, or referring to the realization, fulfillment, or outcome of a matter. As a later technical term, *taʾwīl* refers to the figurative or metaphorical (re)interpretation of a text, particularly Qurʾānic verses and *ḥadīth* reports whose obvious sense is thought to entail anthropomorphism.

muʾawwal: refers to the non-apparent, non-literal sense of a word that is given precedence over the overt meaning in an instance of *taʾwīl*. Contrasted with *ẓāhir*.

tazkiya: Purification of the heart and actions through spiritual and moral discipline of the soul. Synonymous with *taṣawwuf* (in this sense only).

thiqa: term used to designate a reliable authority in *ḥadīth* transmission.

thubūt: (1) the real or factual existence of something, the fact that something obtains or is the case; (2) (of transmitted texts, especially revelation) authenticity, established textual integrity. Contrasted in the first sense with *intifāʾ*.

thābit: factually existing; obtaining or being the case; (with respect to transmitted texts, especially revelation) authentic, of established textual integrity.

tibyān: see *mubīn*

U

ulūhiyya (also *ilāhiyya*): divinity, Godhood. More fundamentally, being worthy of worship, love, and obedience as a god.

ʿuluww: lit. height, highness; being above. Refers to God's being above the created universe (*ʿuluww Allāh ʿalā khalqihi*). Whether God's *ʿuluww* should be understood literally or interpreted figuratively through *taʾwīl* was a major point of contention among various schools of theology.

umma (pl. *umam*): nation. Refers primarily to the collective body of Muslims, conceived as a religious/religio-political community distinct from other human groupings.

ʿuqalāʾ: see *ʿaql*

ʿurf: convention; linguistic convention (of a speech community, indispensable for determining the meaning of a given utterance).

uṣūl (sing. *aṣl*): principles; foundations.

uṣūl al-dīn: the principles or foundations of religion, in reference to the sources and justificatory grounds for belief. Sometimes translated as "theology," but not necessarily in the formal sense of discursive *kalām*.

uṣūl al-fiqh: foundations of jurisprudence, legal theory.

W

waḍʿ: (1) convention; (2) a word's putative initial assignation to a given meaning; the meaning to which a word is considered to have been initially assigned; coinage (of a new term with a particular meaning).

waḥdat al-wujūd: the "unity of being." Mystical doctrine associated with the Sufi school of Muḥyī al-Dīn b. ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), criticized as entailing pantheism (*ḥulūl*) by its opponents. Ibn Taymiyya strongly opposed the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.

wahm: estimation. The ability to apprehend the meaning of sensible objects, draw inferences therefrom, and act accordingly (like a sheep sensing the danger of a nearby wolf and fleeing). Also, the ability to experience an event or state as real in the mind irrespective of its actual occurrence in the outside world.

al-quwwa al-wahmiyya: the estimative faculty.

wahmiyyāt: products of the estimative faculty; events or states experienced as real in the mind irrespective of their occurrence in the outside world.

al-wahm wa-l-takhyīl (rendered as "*wahm* and *takhyīl*"): term used by Ibn Taymiyya for the philosophers' doctrine that statements in revelation pertaining to, e.g., the afterlife are not literally true but only imaginative representations of abstract realities that lie beyond the grasp of non-philosophers.

wajh (pl. *wujūh*): aspect, angle, consideration; point, argument, point of argument (used by Ibn Taymiyya in reference to his discrete arguments against the universal rule).

wājib: necessary (as a qualification of ontological modality, the opposite of possible or contingent); obligatory (as a moral-legal qualification of acts). Contrasted, in the first sense, with *mumkin* (possible, contingent) and *mumtaniʿ* (impossible).

wājib al-wujūd: the Necessarily Existent, God.

wujūb: necessity (ontological); obligatoriness, being obligatory (moral-legal).

walī (pl. *awliyāʾ*): lit. close friend (of God). Righteous person of high spiritual rank, saint.

waqf: suspension of judgement. Refraining from committing to one of two or more opposing views, arguments, or positions.

wāqifa: those who hold an agnostic stance on a question by suspending judgement or refraining from committing to a particular view on it.

waraʿ: moral scrupulousness, scrupulous piety; pious restraint (from committing actions of even slightly questionable moral probity).

waṣf (pl. *awṣāf*): description.

wujūb: see *wājib*

wujūd: existence. Opposite of *ʿadam*.

mawjūd: existing, existent (opposite of *maʿdūm*); (pl. *mawjūdāt*) existent (n.), existing thing, being, entity.

Y

yaqīn: certainty, certitude. Contrasted with *ẓann*.

yaqīnī: certain, known with certainty, definitive. Contrasted with *ẓannī*.

yaqīniyyāt: certain premises; matters known with certainty. Contrasted with *ẓanniyyāt*.

Z

ẓāhir: (1) apparent, manifest; (2) external, outward, outer (as in *ḥiss ẓāhir*, or external sensation); (3) the apparent, obvious, or literal meaning of a word, expression, or text. Contrasted in the first two senses with *bāṭin* and in the third with *muʾawwal*.

ẓann: inconclusiveness, probability (in contrast to *yaqīn* or *qaṭʿ*). Can be translated in some contexts as conjecture, supposition, or even suspicion.

ẓannī: inconclusive, probabilistic, non-definitive; suppositional, conjectural; suspect. Contrasted with *yaqīnī* or *qaṭʿī*.

ẓanniyyāt: non-certain or probabilistic premises; probabilistic or non-definitive matters; matters of supposition or conjecture. Contrasted with *yaqīniyyāt* or *qaṭʿiyyāt/qawāṭiʿ*.

Glossary of Proper Names

A

ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar (d. 73/693): Companion of the Prophet and son of the Caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Was active in narrating traditions from the Prophet and gained a reputation for his precision in recalling events that took place during the Prophet's life.

ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, Abū Bakr (d. 363/974): Ḥanbalī *muḥaddith* and jurist who transmitted the *Kitāb al-Amr* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.

ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd (Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Ḥumayd) (d. 249/863): Early *muḥaddith* who compiled his own *musnad* work. Prominent *ḥadīth* scholars narrated from him, including al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, and Muslim.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Qāḍī Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 415/1025): Major Muʿtazilī theologian, a Shāfiʿī, who presented a systematic discussion of Muʿtazilī doctrine in his ten-volume work *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-ʿadl*.

ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166): Well-known Sufi and Ḥanbalī scholar in Baghdad who, after his death, became the eponym of the Qādiriyya Sufi order. Was greatly respected by Ibn Taymiyya, who wrote a commentary on ʿAbd al-Qādir's mystical treatise *Futūḥ al-ghayb*.

al-Abharī, Athīr al-Dīn (d. 663/1264 or 1265): Influential philosopher, astronomer, astrologer, and mathematician. His philosophical tracts *Īsāghūjī* and *Hidāyat al-ḥikma* are commonly taught in seminaries and other scholastic settings around the world.

Abū Ḥanīfa, al-Nuʿmān b. Thābit (d. 150/767): Founder and eponym of the Ḥanafī school of law. Studied with many noteworthy jurists and theologians, particularly the Kufan legal scholar Ḥammād b. Sulaymān. Some report that he met the Prophet's Companion Anas b. Mālik and therefore counts as a Successor (*tābiʿī*).

Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. between 226/840 and 235/850): Early theologian, often considered the first systematic Muʿtazilī thinker. Introduced the theory of atomism into theology, but all of his writings have been lost.

Abū Muʿādh al-Tūmanī (death date unknown): A leader of the Murjiʾa and head of the Tūmaniyya sub-faction of them. Held that faith (*īmān*) does not shield one against disbelief (*kufr*). Defined faith as consisting of certain traits (*khiṣāl*); abandoning one or more of these traits entails disbelief. Al-Ashʿarī reports that he followed Zuhayr al-Atharī in many of the latter's opinions.

Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996): Sufi ascetic and preacher famous for his *Qūt al-qulūb*, a 48-chapter treatise on Sufi piety and practice that is styled after a manual of jurisprudence.

Abū ʿUbayda, Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā (d. ca. 210/825): Arabic philologist and exegete from Basra of non-Arab, Jewish origin. Was accused of being a *shuʿūbī* (opponent of Arab cultural and political supremacy) and a Khārijī.

Abū Yaʿlā b. al-Farrāʾ (al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā) (d. 458/1066): Prominent Ḥanbalī jurist and theologian, referred to by fellow Ḥanbalīs for centuries simply as "*al-qāḍī*." Author of many works, the most famous of which is his *Kitāb al-Muʿtamad*, one of the first major Ḥanbalī works of theology written on the model of a formal *kalām* treatise.

Abū Zahra, Muḥammad (d. 1394/1974): Prominent twentieth-century Azharī legal scholar. Wrote over thirty books and one hundred articles on Islamic law, Qurʾān commentary, *ḥadīth*, theology, and other topics.

ʿĀʾisha bt. Abī Bakr (d. 58/678): The Prophet's third wife. Over one thousand prophetic *ḥadīth* are said to have been related on her authority, around three hundred of which are recorded in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. ca. 200 CE): Peripatetic philosopher and commentator on Aristotle. Known in the Arabic biographical tradition as al-Iskandar al-Afrūdīsī al-Dimashqī.

ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661): Last of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs. Cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad and an important figure for both Sunnīs and Shīʿīs. His reign as caliph was rife with conflict. Assassinated by an agent of the Khawārij.

al-Āmidī, Sayf al-Dīn (d. 631/1233): Major later Ashʿarī theologian and legal scholar. Criticized by Ibn Taymiyya for suspending judgement (*waqf*) on a number of central theological and legal issues.

al-Āmulī, Karīm al-Dīn (d. 710/1310 or 1311): Prominent Egyptian Sufi who, along with Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī, opposed Ibn Taymiyya for his denunciation of various beliefs and practices that he considered reprehensible innovation (*bidʿa*).

al-Anṣārī, Abū al-Qāsim (d. 512/1118): Shāfiʿī *mutakallim* and Sufi who studied under al-Juwaynī and wrote a commentary of the latter's *Irshād*. Was noted for his intelligence and for his writings on asceticism, worship, and *kalām*.

al-Aṣbahānī, Dāwūd (*see* al-Ẓāhirī, Dāwūd b. Khalaf)

al-Aṣbahānī, Jaʿfar b. Ḥayyān ("Abū al-Shaykh") (d. 369/979): *Muḥaddith* from Isfahan. Teacher of the prominent *ḥadīth* scholars Ibn Mandah and Ibn Mardawayhi.

al-Aṣfahānī (*occasionally* al-Aṣbahānī),[1] Shams al-Dīn Maḥmūd (d. 749/1349): Persian theologian and scholar. Raised in Isfahan but spent most of his life in Syria, then Egypt. Was known for his exegetical writings as well as his works in the rational sciences. Ibn Taymiyya met him while in Damascus and was impressed by his erudition.

al-Ashʿarī, Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 324/935 or 936): Founder of the Ashʿarī school of theology. Studied under the head of the Muʿtazila in Basra, Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī, but publicly renounced his Muʿtazilī affiliations at the age of forty. Subsequently dedicated himself to a systematic defense of traditional doctrine using the methods of the *mutakallimūn*.

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[1] The Arabic *nisba* adjective derived from the Iranian city of Isfahan appears variously as al-Aṣbahānī, al-Aṣfahānī, and al-Iṣfahānī. I have cited each figure's name according to the spelling most commonly found in the biographical dictionaries and/or on the title pages of the figure's published works.

al-Ashʿarī, Abū Mūsā (d. ca. 42/662): Companion of the Prophet and ancestor of the famous theologian Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī.

ʿAssāf al-Naṣrānī ("the Christian") (death date unknown): Christian from Suwaydāʾ, in southwestern Syria, alleged to have publicly insulted the Prophet Muḥammad in 693/1294. This incident marked Ibn Taymiyya's first incursion into political life.

Averroes (*see* Ibn Rushd)

Avicenna (*see* Ibn Sīnā)

B

al-Baghdādī, ʿAbd al-Qāhir (d. 429/1037 or 1038): Ashʿarī theologian who taught and lived in Nishapur and Khurasan. His *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn* is a systematic treatise that covers the views of various Muslim sects on central topics of theology.

al-Baghdādī, Abū al-Barakāt b. Malkā(n) (d. 560/1164 or 1165): Jewish convert to Islam and philosopher. Parts of his most famous work, *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar*, were derived from Ibn Sīnā's *Shifāʾ*, though he was also critical of this latter. Composed a number of novel works in both philosophy and medicine.

al-Bāhilī, Abū al-Ḥasan (d. ca. 370/980): Ashʿarī theologian from Basra and one of the direct pupils of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī.

Baqī b. Makhlad (d. 276/889): Cordovan *muḥaddith* who helped introduce *ḥadīth* studies in Andalusia. Traveled to Baghdad and other cities in Iraq where he came into contact with prominent *ḥadīth* scholars, including Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. Wrote a *tafsīr* of the Qurʾān.

al-Bāqillānī, al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib (d. 403/1013): Prominent Ashʿarī theologian and Mālikī legal scholar. Played a pivotal role in consolidating and systematizing early Ashʿarī *kalām*. Ibn Taymiyya considers him the best of the Ashʿarī *mutakallimūn*.

al-Barbahārī, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (d. 329/941): Prominent Ḥanbalī scholar who was the disciple of Sahl al-Tustarī. Famous mainly for his connection with rioting in Baghdad in defense of Ḥanbalī doctrine in the 320s/930s.

al-Baṣrī, Abū al-Ḥusayn (d. 436/1044): Muʿtazilī theologian and legal scholar who was often accused of being influenced by the philosophers for his criticism of the Bahshamiyya Muʿtazila. His teachings influenced the famous Ashʿarī master al-Juwaynī.

al-Baṣrī, Abū Muḥammad b. ʿAbdik (d. 347/958 or 959): Important Ḥanafī scholar who wrote *Sharḥ al-Jāmiʿayn*, among other works, and who taught and transmitted the Ḥanafī *madhhab*.

al-Baṣrī, al-Ḥasan (d. 110/728): Exegete and pietist belonging to the generation of the Successors (*tābiʿūn*). Known for his knowledge of *asbāb al-nuzūl* (the "occasions of revelation") and universally revered by later schools of law, theology, and Sufism.

Baybars (*see* al-Jāshnikīr, Rukn al-Dīn Baybars)

al-Bayḍāwī, Nāṣir al-Dīn ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar (d. 685/1286 or 691/1292): Shāfiʿī jurist, Ashʿarī theologian, and Qurʾān commentator best known for his *tafsīr* work, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-taʾwīl*.

al-Bayhaqī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad (d. 458/1066): Ashʿarī theologian and Shāfiʿī jurist who provided a foundation for the doctrines of the Shāfiʿī school of law using *ḥadīth*.

Burghūth, Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā (d. 240/854 or 241/855): "Jahmī" theologian and interlocutor of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal during the *miḥna* (inquisition).

al-Buwayṭī, Abū Yaʿqūb b. Yaḥyā (d. 231/846): Prominent legal scholar and top student and companion of al-Shāfiʿī, reputed for his great learning and piety. Listed by al-Baghdādī (in *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*) as one of the "*mutakallimūn* among the jurists and authorities of the legal schools."

D

al-Dārimī, Abū Saʿīd ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd (d. ca. 280/894): Prominent *muḥaddith*, Ḥanbalī jurist, and theologian. Student of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and other prominent experts of law and *ḥadīth*. Composed a great *musnad* work in *ḥadīth* as well as the polemical treatise *al-Radd ʿalā al-Jahmiyya*.

al-Dawānī, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Asʿad (d. 908/1502): Prominent philosopher and theologian who authored numerous commentaries on well-known works of philosophy, logic, and Sufism. Wrote original works on these topics, as well as on Qurʾānic exegesis, dogmatic theology, and ethics (*akhlāq*).

al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 748/1348): Shāfiʿī historian, biographer, and *ḥadīth* expert with a strong leaning towards the methodology of *ahl al-ḥadīth*. Was critical of Ibn Taymiyya's polemics against the *ʿulamāʾ* and accused him of having "swallowed the poison of the philosophers."

Ḍirār b. ʿAmr (d. ca. 200/815): Important Muʿtazilī theologian who tried to spread the methods of *kalām* among the public. Held that belief was linked to intellectual understanding.

Duḥaym, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ibrāhīm (d. 245/859): Prominent Damascene jurist and *muḥaddith*. Al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nasāʾī, along with numerous others, relate *ḥadīth* from him.

F

al-Fārābī, Abū Naṣr Muḥammad (d. ca. 339/950): Foundational figure in Islamic philosophy, referred to as the "Second Teacher" (i.e., after Aristotle). Was an authority in logic and Neoplatonism and regarded the language of revelation as merely a popular expression of philosophical truth.

G

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid (d. 505/1111): One of the most pivotal figures in all Islamic thought. Synthesized and profoundly influenced the subsequent development of Islamic theology, legal theory, and Sufism. Among his most famous works are *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*) and *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*).

H

Ḥafṣ al-Fard, Abū ʿAmr (*or* Abū Yaḥyā) (fl. ca. 200/815): Well-known theologian, either from Egypt or later migrated there. Sources vary regarding his theological views, with some claiming he belonged to the Mujbira, others to the Ḍirāriyya or the Najjāriyya, and others to the Muʿtazila. Also known for debating al-Shāfiʿī.

Ḥājjī Khalīfa, Muṣṭafā b. ʿAbd Allāh (Kâtip Çelebi) (d. 1067/1657): Prolific Ottoman historian, bibliographer, and geographer. Name derives from his secretarial post in the Ottoman bureaucracy.

al-Ḥamawī, Ibn Wāṣil (d. 697/1298): Shāfiʿī scholar and historian. Studied discursive theology and philosophy with the foremost authority of his time, al-Khusrūshāhī, but did not write on theology. Most famous for his historical chronicle on the Ayyubids and his work on logic.

al-Harawī, ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089): Ḥanbalī and well-known Sufi. Studied *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* at an early age, beginning with Shāfiʿī teachers but subsequently becoming a Ḥanbalī. His *Dhamm al-kalām wa-ahlihi* is a key text for understanding the critique of rational theology in Islam.

al-Harawī, Abū Dharr al-Anṣārī (d. 434/1043): Mālikī scholar and shaykh of the *ḥaram*. Transmitted *ḥadīth* in Khurasan and Baghdad. Was a student of al-Bāqillānī.

al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (*see* al-Muḥāsibī)

Ḥarmala b. Yaḥyā, Abū ʿAbd Allāh (d. 243/858): Legal scholar and *muḥaddith*, student and companion of al-Shāfiʿī. Listed by al-Baghdādī (in *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*) as one of the "*mutakallimūn* among the jurists and authorities of the legal schools."

Hārūn al-Rashīd (Abū Jaʿfar Hārūn al-Manṣūr) (r. 170–193/786–809): Fifth Abbasid caliph, whose era is often romanticized as a golden age. In reality, his turbulent reign, marred by political disturbances, marked a turning point in Abbasid rule and inaugurated the political unraveling of the empire.

Ḥātim al-Ṭāʾī (d. 578 or ca. 605 CE): Pre-Islamic Arab poet famed for his legendary generosity.

al-Ḥillī, Jamāl al-Dīn ("al-ʿAllāma") (d. 726/1325): Famous Shīʿī jurist who was given the epithet "al-ʿAllāma" (the "eminently knowledgeable one"). Came from a prestigious family of Shīʿī theologians and studied under Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī. Is said to have written over five hundred books; the eight that survive are highly regarded in Shīʿism.

I

Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿAbd Allāh (d. ca. 68/687): Paternal cousin of the Prophet, prominent Companion, and highly regarded exegete. Known for his expertise on the life and sayings of the Prophet, legal matters, and the rulings of the first three caliphs.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, Yūsuf b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 463/1071): Cordovan scholar of *fiqh* and the science of genealogy who was considered the best *muḥaddith* of his era. Leaned towards Ẓāhirī teachings early on, but later in life became a Mālikī, then a Shāfiʿī.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, Shams al-Dīn (d. 744/1344): Ḥanbalī scholar and student of Ibn Taymiyya. Wrote the most complete and authoritative source for Ibn Taymiyya's life, *al-ʿUqūd al-durriyya min manāqib Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, ʿIzz al-Dīn (d. 656/1258): Muʿtazilī theologian with Shīʿī inclinations. Was also a poet, historian, literary theorist, and an administrative official in Abbasid Baghdad. Known for his commentary on *Nahj al-balāgha*, a compilation of sayings attributed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 327/938): Erudite *muḥaddith* from Rayy (near present-day Tehran). Highly regarded by the scholars of his era and noted for his contributions to the *ḥadīth*-critical science known as "impugning and validation" (*al-jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl*).

Ibn Abī Mūsā (al-Hāshimī), al-Sharīf Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad (d. 428/1036 or 1037): Ḥanbalī scholar and judge. Composed *al-Irshād ilā sabīl al-rashād* on creed and law, as well as a commentary on al-Khiraqī's work on Ḥanbalī *fiqh*.

Ibn Abī Shayba, Abū Bakr (d. 235/849): *Muḥaddith* and historian from Iraq. Came from a family of religious scholars and wrote several books, including *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shayba*, one of the first *ḥadīth* compilations in the *muṣannaf* genre (in which *ḥadīth* are arranged by topic).

Ibn ʿAqīl, Abū al-Wafāʾ ʿAlī (d. 513/1119): Ḥanbalī jurist and theologian who supported Ashʿarī-style methods of *kalām*. Known for his learning and piety and was an important legal authority for generations of Ḥanbalī jurists.

Ibn ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn (d. 638/1240): Famous Andalusian Sufi known for his controversial mystical monism. Author of many works, two of his most famous being *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Ibn Taymiyya strongly opposed Ibn ʿArabī's notion of what came to be called the "unity of being," or *waḥdat al-wujūd*.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr (d. 543/1148): *Muḥaddith* from Seville who studied under al-Ghazālī in the East. Wrote books on *ḥadīth*, law, the Qurʾān, and a variety of other topics. Was not universally accepted as an authority on *ḥadīth*.

Ibn ʿAsākir, Abū al-Qāsim ʿAlī (d. 571/1176): Shāfiʿī *ḥadīth* master ("*ḥāfiẓ*") and historian who forcefully defended the legitimacy of rational theology. Came from a distinguished political family in Damascus that produced a number of Shāfiʿī scholars.

Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309): Well-known, influential Sufi shaykh of the Shādhilī order and a fierce adversary of Ibn Taymiyya on account of the latter's criticism of Ibn ʿArabī and other Sufi figures.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ, ʿUmar b. ʿAlī (d. 632/1235): Renowned Sufi poet from Cairo who was a Shāfiʿī in law and a well-known mystic. His poetry was censured for its use of a female beloved to symbolize God, but he is regarded as one of the greatest Arab poets and, for many, a saint (*walī*).

Ibn al-Farrāʾ, (al-Qāḍī) Abū Yaʿlā (*see* Abū Yaʿlā b. al-Farrāʾ)

Ibn Fūrak, Abū Bakr Muḥammad (d. 406/1015): Ashʿarī theologian, Shāfiʿī jurist, and *ḥadīth* scholar. Studied *kalām* under al-Bāhilī, a direct student of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī. Wrote over one hundred works in legal theory, Qurʾānic exegesis, and theology, including the well-known *Ṭabaqāt al-mutakallimīn*.

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449): Well-known Egyptian judge, historian, and *ḥadīth* scholar. Most famous for his large number of works in the *ḥadīth* sciences, widely considered the summation of the discipline.

Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad (d. 241/855): Iconic theologian, jurist, and *muḥaddith* who founded the Ḥanbalī school of Sunnī law. Widely acclaimed across school boundaries as a hero of the *miḥna* for refusing to compromise on the uncreatedness of the Qurʾān. His foremost work is his *Musnad* collection of prophetic *ḥadīth*.

Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī b. Saʿīd (d. 456/1064): Ẓāhirī jurist, theologian, and poet from Andalusia. Was the greatest (and last major) exponent of the Ẓāhirī school. Was also a skilled littérateur and historian of Muslim schismatics, on which he wrote his well-known *Kitāb al-Fiṣal fī al-milal wa-l-ahwāʾ wa-l-niḥal*.

Ibn Isḥāq (b. Yasār b. Khiyār), Muḥammad (d. ca. 150/767): Born in Medina, was one of three main authorities on the life of the Prophet. Was also trained in *akhbār* and *ḥadīth* transmission. His *Sīra* has been lost, but we have a version of it that was edited and compiled by Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833).

Ibn al-Jawzī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī (d. 597/1201): High-profile Ḥanbalī jurist, *muḥaddith*, historian, and preacher from Baghdad who was partial to rationalist theology of the Ashʿarī type. Was a prolific writer whose biographies, in addition to his sermons, were highly acclaimed by Ibn Taymiyya.

Ibn Karrām, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad (d. 255/869): Founder of the Karrāmiyya theological sect, which flourished from the third/ninth century until the Mongol invasions. His doctrine was widely criticized for its excessive literalism and its anthropomorphism. His works have been lost and are only known through second-hand citation in other texts.

Ibn Kathīr, Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar (d. 774/1373): Syrian Shāfiʿī and *ḥadīth* scholar, student of Ibn Taymiyya. Author of the historical work *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, a large compilation of *ḥadīth*, and a well-known work of *tafsīr*. Also wrote a biographical dictionary of Shāfiʿī scholars, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya* (not to be confused with Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī's *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*).

Ibn Khuzayma, Abū Bakr Muḥammad (d. 311/924): Shāfiʿī jurist and *ḥadīth* scholar from Nishapur to whom later Shāfiʿī's referred as "the supreme scholar." Known for his mastery of *ḥadīth* and his defense of the evolving school of Sunnī *ḥadīth* scholars.

Ibn Kullāb, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh (d. ca. 241/855): Forerunner of al-Ashʿarī in the period of the *miḥna*. Was a "semi-rationalist" who used some *kalām* argumentation in defense of (more or less) traditionalist theological positions.

Ibn Maḍāʾ al-Qurṭubī (d. 592/1196): Ẓāhirī Andalusian grammarian. His *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-nuḥāh* calls for a fundamental overhaul of what he considered the abstruseness, artificiality, and needless complexification of the existing linguistic sciences.

Ibn al-Mājishūn, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Abī Salama (d. 164/780 or 781): Early Medinan legist, *muftī* of Medina, and contemporary of Mālik b. Anas. Biographical dictionaries record a rivalry between him and Mālik. Wrote works on law, of which only fragments have survived.

Ibn al-Mājishūn, ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 213/828 or 214/829): Son of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Abī Salama b. al-Mājishūn (see foregoing entry). Was an accomplished legist and *muftī* of Medina in his own right.

Ibn Makhlūf, Zayn al-Dīn (d. 718/1318): Mālikī judge of Cairo who played a large role in many of Ibn Taymiyya's troubles after the latter's arrival in Egypt.

Ibn Mardawayhi, Abū Bakr (d. 410/1020): Composed a *mustakhraj* on al-Bukhārī's famous *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Was highly esteemed by his contemporaries for his contributions to the fields of *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr*, including a lengthy work of Qurʾānic exegesis.

Ibn Masʿūd, ʿAbd Allāh (d. 32/652 or 653): Companion of the Prophet and prominent Qurʾān reciter. Also known for his transmission of *ḥadīth* and Qurʾānic exegesis.

Ibn Mujāhid (al-Ṭāʾī), Abū ʿAbd Allāh (d. 360s/970s or 370s/980s): From Basra, was a pupil of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī at the time of the latter's death. Among his students were al-Bāqillānī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī.

Ibn al-Mundhir, Abū Bakr Muḥammad (d. ca. 318/930): Prominent Shāfiʿī jurist and exegete considered by some classical scholars to have reached the highest level of *ijtihād* (that of *mujtahid muṭlaq*). His legal writings are quoted extensively.

Ibn al-Nafīs, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 687/1288): Famous physician and prolific author who also studied grammar, logic, and the Islamic religious sciences. He (in addition to Ibn Sīnā, al-Suhrawardī, and Ibn Ṭufayl) wrote a philosophical treatise named *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān*

Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr (d. 842/1438): Damascene *ḥadīth* master ("*ḥāfiẓ*") and historian. Wrote an extensive defense of Ibn Taymiyya called *al-Radd al-wāfir ʿalā man zaʿama bi-anna man sammā Ibn Taymiyya "Shaykh al-Islām" kāfir* (The ample response to those who claim that whoever calls Ibn Taymiyya "Shaykh al-Islam" is a disbeliever).

Ibn Qalāwūn, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 709–741/1310–1341): Mamluk sultan whom Ibn Taymiyya petitioned to dispatch an army to Syria. His tumultuous reign took place over three periods. Also known as al-Malik al-Nāṣir.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350): Famous student of Ibn Taymiyya who synthesized, organized, and popularized his master's teachings. Produced a large body of writing. His students include Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī.

Ibn Qudāma, Muwaffaq al-Dīn (d. 620/1223): Ḥanbalī (and anti-Ashʿarī) scholar and traditionalist (i.e., non-speculative) theologian. Known for his works on Ḥanbalī law and legal theory, *al-Mughnī*, *al-ʿUmda*, and *Rawḍat al-nāẓir*.

Ibn Qutayba, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh (d. 276/889): Prolific polymath and littérateur of Persian origin best known for his contributions to Arabic literature. Also wrote on Qurʾānic exegesis, *ḥadīth*, theology, law, and the natural sciences. Well-known works include *Mushkil* (also *Gharīb*) *al-Qurʾān, Taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, and *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*.

Ibn Rāhawayhi, Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm (d. 238/853): Renowned jurist from Khurasan who was given the sobriquet "leader of the believers (*amīr al-muʾminīn*) in *ḥadīth*." Student and travel companion of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.

Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad (d. 795/1393): Famous Ḥanbalī *muḥaddith* whose *al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* is considered an important source for Ibn Taymiyya's biography.

Ibn Rushayyiq, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 749/1349): Ibn Taymiyya's personal scribe and one of his closest associates. Wrote a catalogue of Ibn Taymiyya's works, *Asmāʾ muʾallafāt Ibn Taymiyya*, and endeavored to collect all of Ibn Taymiyya's writings.

Ibn Rushd (*Lat.* **Averroes), Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad** (d. 595/1198): Important Mālikī jurist, famed "Commentator of Aristotle," and last of the major Muslim Peripatetic philosophers. Author of *Faṣl al-maqāl* on the relationship between reason and revelation and of a refutation of al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, titled *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*.

Ibn Sabʿīn, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq (d. 669/1271): Andalusian philosopher and Sufi in the way of Ibn ʿArabī. Was respected for his knowledge of medicine and alchemy but was marginalized and exiled for his daring Sufi ideas. Categorized by Ibn Khaldūn as a monist.

Ibn Saʿd, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad (d. 230/845): Basran *muḥaddith* who was a client (*mawlā*, pl. *mawālī*) of the Banū Hāshim and who traveled to study and to collect *ḥadīth*. Famous for his *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, a biographical dictionary of over four thousand *ḥadīth* narrators.

Ibn Ṣaṣrā, Najm al-Dīn (d. 723/1322): Shāfiʿī judge and chief *qāḍī* of Damascus. Studied *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence, and grammar. Re-opened the case against Ibn Taymiyya's *Wāsiṭiyya* and resigned when the third council refrained from condemning the treatise.

Ibn Shākir (al-Kutubī), Muḥammad (d. 764/1363): Syrian historian whose two surviving works were well-regarded and often cited. His *Fawāt al-wafayāt* is an important source for the biography of Ibn Taymiyya.

Ibn Sīnā (*Lat.* Avicenna), Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn (d. 428/1037): Famous physician and the most important figure of the Muslim Peripatetic tradition. Took up many of the questions that had been put forth in *kalām*, and his metaphysical theses, in turn, were taken up and debated by *kalām* theologians. Exercised an enormous influence on subsequent philosophy, *kalām*, Sufism, and Muslim thought in general.

Ibn Taymiyya, ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm (d. 682/1284): Ibn Taymiyya's father. An accomplished Ḥanbalī scholar and author of numerous writings, including the additions he made to the well-known work of Ḥanbalī legal theory begun by his own father (Majd al-Dīn), *al-Musawwada fī uṣūl al-fiqh*.

Ibn Taymiyya, Fakhr al-Dīn (d. 622/1225): Uncle of Ibn Taymiyya's grandfather (Majd al-Dīn). A scholar of Ḥanbalī law and *ḥadīth* with knowledge of poetry and literature as well.

Ibn Taymiyya, Majd al-Dīn (d. 653/1255): Ibn Taymiyya's grandfather and an important Ḥanbalī authority. Began the well-known work of Ḥanbalī legal theory *al-Musawwada fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, which was continued by his son, ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm, and eventually completed by Ibn Taymiyya himself.

Ibn Ṭufayl, Abū Bakr Muḥammad (d. 581/1185): Andalusian philosopher, royal physician, and close confidant of the second Muwaḥḥid ("Almohad") caliph, Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf. Ibn Taymiyya labeled him one of the "heretical mystics" (*malāḥidat al-ṣūfiyya*). His only surviving work is the philosophical allegory *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān*.

Ibn Tūmart, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad (d. 524/1130): Berber leader who founded the Muwaḥḥid movement. Studied with al-Ghazālī in the East and subsequently led an opposition against the Murābiṭūn ("Almoravids"). His intransigence in "exhorting to good and forbidding evil" often led to riotous anger and brought him harm.

Ibn al-Zāghūnī, Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 527/1132): Eminent Ḥanbalī jurist of Baghdad and teacher of the renowned Ḥanbalī jurist Ibn al-Jawzī. Like his student, Ibn al-Zāghūnī held theological positions close to those of the *mutakallimūn*.

al-Ījī, ʿAḍud al-Dīn (d. 756/1355): Shāfiʿī jurist and well-known later Ashʿarī theologian. Served as judge in Sulṭāniyya for the last Ilkhanid sultan, Abū Saʿīd, and later as chief *qāḍī* in Shiraz.

al-ʿIjlī, Muḥammad b. Nūḥ (d. 218/833): Scholar who, along with Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, doggedly refused to assent to the doctrine of the created Qurʾān. Died in chains (during the *miḥna*) while being transported from the Byzantine border to Baghdad.

al-Ikhnāʾī, Taqī al-Dīn (d. 750/1349): Mālikī chief judge in Damascus who opposed Ibn Taymiyya on the issue of visiting graves. Ibn Taymiyya composed a refutation against him titled *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-Ikhnāʾī*.

Ilkiyā al-Harrāsī, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarī (d. 504/1110): Shāfiʿī jurist born in Tabaristan. Studied under al-Juwaynī at the Niẓāmiyya madrasa in Baghdad, where he was an associate of al-Ghazālī. Was accused of holding Bāṭinī beliefs and imprisoned but was later exonerated and released.

al-Isfarāyīnī, Abū Isḥāq (d. 418/1027): Ashʿarī theologian and Shāfiʿī jurist who was one of the leading figures in the development of Ashʿarī doctrine in his generation. Fought against anthropomorphism in Nishapur, along with Ibn Fūrak. None of his works are extant, but references to them are found in other works.

al-Iskāfī, Abū Jaʿfar (d. 240/854): Baghdādī Muʿtazilī theologian who was the first to focus the discussion of Q. *Āl ʿImrān* 3:7 on the notion of ambiguity, defining *muḥkam* verses as those that are univocal or determinate in meaning and *mutashābih* verses as those that are indeterminate and admit of more than one interpretation.

J

al-Jaʿd b. Dirham (executed between 105/724 and 120/738): Early heretical figure executed by Khālid al-Qasrī, Umayyad governor of Iraq, for rejecting the divine attributes and being one of the first to hold that the Qurʾān was created.

Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765): Sixth Shīʿī Imam revered by the generality of Muslims for his piety, asceticism, and erudition. Eponym of the Jaʿfarī school of law, though none of his own juridical works have survived. Left behind many children, the most noteworthy being his successor, Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim.

Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/746): Early heretical figure from Khurasan who was a pupil of al-Jaʿd b. Dirham. Adopted *jabrī* views in theology, tending towards a strict determinism and categorical denial of human free will. His views on the issue were supported by the ruling Umayyads.

al-Jāshnikīr, Rukn al-Dīn Baybars (Baybars II) (d. 709/1310): Burjī Mamluk sultan and disciple of the shaykh Naṣr al-Manbijī. His short rule ended when he was imprisoned then killed in Cairo by al-Malik al-Nāṣir (Ibn Qalāwūn). Not to be confused with the famous Baybars I (Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Bunduqdārī), who died in 676/1277.

al-Jīlānī, ʿAbd al-Qādir (*see* ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī)

al-Jubbāʾī, Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad (d. 303/915 or 916): Leading authority of the Basran Muʿtazila of his day and teacher of al-Ashʿarī, who later turned against Muʿtazilī *kalām* and worked to refute al-Jubbāʾī's teachings. No complete work of his has survived.

al-Jubbāʾī, Abū Hāshim ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 321/933): Son of Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī and one of the last Muʿtazila to exert a direct influence on Sunnī thought. None of his works have survived.

al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 297/910): Influential early Sufi from Baghdad and the greatest exponent of "sober" Sufism. Rejected the ecstatic utterances of other early

Sufis, such as al-Ḥallāj, and his thought laid the foundations for later Sufism. Highly respected by Ibn Taymiyya, who refers to him as "our shaykh."

al-Jurjānī, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Sharīf (d. 816/1413): Legist, linguist, theologian, philosopher, and noted astronomer. Among his best-known works is his *Taʿrīfāt* (Definitions), a glossary covering some two thousand terms from the religious disciplines, philosophy, and science.

al-Juwaynī, Abū al-Maʿālī ("Imām al-Ḥaramayn") (d. 478/1085): Major Shāfiʿī jurist, legal theoretician, and Ashʿarī theologian. Taught al-Ghazālī at the Niẓāmiyya madrasa in Baghdad. Was a bridge between the early and the later Ashʿarī doctrines, distinguished primarily by the later school's open endorsement of *taʾwīl* (rather than *tafwīḍ*) for dealing with scriptural passages thought to entail *tashbīh*.

K

al-Kalwadhānī, Abū al-Khaṭṭāb Maḥfūẓ (d. 510/1117): Ḥanbalī jurist noted for his intelligence, diligence in jurisprudential matters, erudition in writing, and prodigious knowledge of *ḥadīth*. Was a disciple of Abū Yaʿlā.

al-Karābīsī, Abū ʿAlī (d. 245/859 or 248/862): Shāfiʿī jurist and theologian. Held that the verbal pronunciation (*talaffuẓ*) of the Qurʾān was created, which earned him the reprimand of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and subsequent friction with the Ḥanbalīs.

al-Karkhī, Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 340/952): Influential Ḥanafī legal theorist and contemporary of al-Ashʿarī. Was a Muʿtazilī, according to al-Dhahabī, and wrote a book on legal maxims.

al-Khallāl, Abū Bakr (d. 311/923): Prominent Ḥanbalī *muḥaddith*, legal scholar, and theologian. Very little is known about his life. Although his writings were very important, only a few fragments have survived.

al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī (d. 463/1071): Ḥanbalī who later showed a preference for the Shāfiʿī legal school and Ashʿarī theology. Collected *ḥadīth* and also studied law. Famous for his biographical encyclopedia, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, which includes almost eight thousand scholars and personalities in Baghdad's cultural and political scenes.

al-Khūnajī, Afḍal al-Dīn (d. 646/1248): Top logician of his day and a judge of Persian origin best known for his logical treatise *Kashf al-asrār ʿan ghawāmiḍ al-afkār*. Modified a number of Ibn Sīnā's positions. His importance was recognized by Ibn Khaldūn.

al-Kinānī, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. between 218/833 and 240/854 or 855): Disciple of al-Shāfiʿī who accompanied him to Yemen. Known for his debate against Bishr al-Marīsī concerning the ontological status of the Qurʾān.

al-Kindī, Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq (d. ca. 252/866): First Muslim philosopher of note and the only one of Arab descent (and thus nicknamed *faylasūf al-ʿArab*, or "the philosopher of the Arabs"). Sought to bridge the gap between philosophy and religion, advocated for the application of rational philosophical methods to the texts of revelation, and inclined towards some Muʿtazilī doctrines.

M

Maimonides (Mūsā b. Maymūn) (d. 601/1204): Jewish physician and philosopher who was born in Andalusia and died in Egypt. Considered one of the most influential Jewish thinkers of the Middle Ages, famous especially for his work *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn* (*The Guide for the Perplexed*). Was greatly influenced by al-Fārābī, as well as by Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī.

Mālik b. Anas, Abū ʿAbd Allāh (d. 179/795): Famous jurist and founder of the Mālikī school of law. Spent most of his life in Medina. His *Kitāb al-Muwaṭṭaʾ* is the oldest surviving collection of *ḥadīth*. Ibn Taymiyya praises Mālik's methodology for its close following of the prophetic Sunna as embodied in the practice of the people of Medina (*ahl al-Madīna*).

al-Maʾmūn, Abū al-ʿAbbās (r. 198–218/813–833): Seventh Abbasid caliph and son of the famed Hārūn al-Rashīd. Was known for his love of knowledge and intellectualism. Founded the Bayt al-Ḥikma ("House of Wisdom") as a public institution in Baghdad and also took part in executing the *miḥna*.

al-Manbijī, Naṣr b. Sulaymān (d. 719/1319): One of the leading members of the Damascene disciples of Ibn ʿArabī. Spiritual advisor to Baybars al-Jāshnikīr. Ibn Taymiyya sent him a letter condemning the monism of Ibn ʿArabī.

al-Maqdisī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. Abī al-Faraj (d. 536/1141 or 1142): Ḥanbalī jurist who was referred to as the "shaykh of the Shām," the same honorific held by his father, Abū al-Faraj al-Maqdisī.

al-Maqdisī, Abū al-Faraj al-Shīrāzī (d. 486/1093): Leading Ḥanbalī scholar in his day, originally from Shiraz. Studied under Abū Yaʿlā in Baghdad, then moved to Jerusalem (Ar. *Bayt al-Maqdis*, hence "al-Maqdisī"). Wrote several important works in theology and law and was responsible for spreading the Ḥanbalī school in the Levant.

Mattā b. Yūnus, Abū Bishr (d. 328/940): Nestorian Christian scholar of logic and teacher of al-Fārābī. Commented on Aristotle and promoted the reception of Peripatetic philosophy in the Islamic world by translating texts from Syriac into Arabic.

al-Māturīdī, Abū Manṣūr (d. ca. 333/944): Ḥanafī theologian, jurist, and exegete from Samarqand. Founder of one of the two main schools of Sunnī *kalām*. His theology is very close, in most points, to that of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī.

Muḥammad b. al-Hayṣam (d. 407[?]/1016 or 1017): Karrāmī theologian who, in elaborating the school's theology and technical vocabulary, attempted to rectify a number of Ibn Karrām's positions. Upheld God's being above and separate from creation. Reinterpreted the term *jism* ("body") to mean simply any thing that existed as an independent or self-standing (*qāʾim bi-dhātihi*) entity.

Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 37/657): Younger Companion of the Prophet Muḥammad and son of the Prophet's cousin Jaʿfar, brother of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. Was martyred at the Battle of Ṣiffīn.

al-Muḥāsibī, (Abū ʿAbd Allāh) al-Ḥārith (d. 243/857): Famous early Sufi and immediate forerunner of al-Ashʿarī. Was a "semi-rationalist" who used some measure of *kalām* argumentation in defending traditionalist theological positions.

Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. between 100/718 and 104/722): Successor (*tābiʿī*) and well-known early exegete. Was said to be the most reliable in *tafsīr* in his era.

Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767): Qurʾān commentator whose works on *tafsīr* are important owing to their early date. Also transmitted *ḥadīth* but was reproached for being inaccurate with *isnād*s. Was also accused of anthropomorphism and having sectarian leanings.

al-Muqtadir bi-Llāh (Abū al-Faḍl Jaʿfar al-Muʿtaḍid) (r. 295–320/908–932): Thirteenth Abbasid caliph and youngest (thirteen years old) at the time of his accession to the throne.

al-Mutawakkil, Jaʿfar b. al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 232–247/847–861): Tenth Abbasid caliph. Ended the *miḥna*, deposed the Muʿtazila, and inaugurated a return to Sunnī orthodoxy. Emphasized his adherence to Ḥanbalī doctrine and the way of *ahl al-ḥadīth*.

al-Mutayyam, ʿAbd Allāh b. Khiḍr al-Ḥarīrī (d. 731/1331): Damascene shaykh of Anatolian origin who, along with a colleague of his, wrote a lengthy elegy (*marthiya*) for Ibn Taymiyya. In it, we read of "hundreds of thousands" of mourners and "multitude upon multitude" of women in attendance at Ibn Taymiyya's obsequies.

N

al-Najjār, al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad (d. ca. 220/835): Theologian during the reign of al-Maʾmūn. His views influenced the early Muʿtazila, and his opinions helped enable Sunnī scholars to defend traditional doctrines through reasoned arguments.

al-Nasafī, Abū al-Barakāt Ḥāfiẓ al-Dīn (d. 701/1301 or 710/1310): Ḥanafī jurist and a representative of post-Ghazālī Ashʿarī *kalām*. Wrote *Kitāb al-Manār fī uṣūl al-fiqh* on the foundations of law, a number of legal commentaries, and a *tafsīr* of the Qurʾān.

al-Naẓẓām, Abū Isḥāq (d. between 220/835 and 230/845): Theologian from the Basran school of the Muʿtazila. His writings have been lost, but many fragments have been preserved in the works of other scholars. His eccentric views were condemned even by his fellow Muʿtazilīs.

Niẓām al-Mulk (active 455–485/1063–1092): Famous Seljuq vizier who established posts specifically for teaching Ashʿarī theology in the major madrasas of his empire. The most famous such school was the Niẓāmiyya of Baghdad, whose chair was held by al-Juwaynī, then by his student, al-Ghazālī.

P

Proclus (d. 485 CE): Head of the Platonic Academy in Athens and a scholastic systematizer of Neoplatonic thought. Was a link between ancient and medieval philosophy, and translations of his thought played an important role in medieval Arabic thought.

Q

al-Qalānisī, Abū al-ʿAbbās (fl. second half of the third/ninth century): Follower of Ibn Kullāb and an immediate forerunner of al-Ashʿarī. Like al-Muḥāsibī, can be considered a "semi-rationalist" who used some *kalām* argumentation in defending (more or less) traditionalist theological positions.

al-Qazwīnī, Jalāl al-Dīn (*also* **Imām al-Dīn) b. ʿUmar** (d. 739/1338): Shāfiʿī judge in Damascus who questioned Ibn Taymiyya on charges of anthropomorphism after the publication of his treatise *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya*, which was hostile to Ashʿarī doctrine and to *kalām* in general. Was known as the *khaṭīb* (preacher) of Damascus.

al-Qūnawī, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn (d. 729/1329): Shāfiʿī chief judge and follower of Ibn ʿArabī. He, along with the Mālikī chief judge, al-Ikhnāʾī, sentenced Ibn Taymiyya to prison in the citadel of Damascus for his treatise *Risāla fī ziyārat al-qubūr*, which condemns visiting the graves of the *awliyāʾ* and seeking intercession through them.

al-Qūnawī, Ṣadr al-Dīn (d. 673/1274): Prominent disciple of Ibn ʿArabī, interpreter of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, and author of important original works on theoretical Sufism.

al-Qushayrī, Abū al-Qāsim (d. 465/1073): Shāfiʿī jurist, theologian, and well-known Sufi. Studied theology and legal theory with Ashʿarī scholars. Composed, among other works, a mystical *tafsīr* and a famous treatise on Sufism, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*.

R

Rabīʿa b. Abī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Farrūkh (d. ca. 136/753 or 754): Famous Successor (*tābiʿī*) who served as a notable *muftī* in Medina. Was renowned for his exercise of juridical reasoning (*ijtihād al-raʾy*), on account of which he was nicknamed "Rabīʿat al-Raʾy." Had many famous disciples, the most prominent of whom was Mālik b. Anas.

al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (*occasionally* **al-Aṣbahānī), Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn** (d. ca. 502/1108): Religious and literary scholar who influenced al-Ghazālī. His *tafsīr* has been only partially preserved, along with quotations in other manuscripts. His best-known work is a treatise on ethics titled *al-Dharīʿa ilā makārim al-Sharīʿa*.

al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn (d. 606/1209): Renowned Persian Shāfiʿī theologian, polymath, and exegete whose zealous defense of Sunnism made him an adversary of the Muʿtazila. Was one of the main architects of "philosophical theology" in the century after al-Ghazālī. Last great Ashʿarī theologian before Ibn Taymiyya, and it is al-Rāzī's articulation of the universal rule of interpretation that Ibn Taymiyya sets out to refute in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*.

S

Ṣadaqa b. al-Ḥusayn (al-Baghdādī), Abū al-Faraj (*also known as* Ibn al-Ḥaddād al-Baghdādī) (d. 573/1177): Ḥanbalī chronicler and literary figure who inclined towards philosophy and adhered to some aspects of Muʿtazilī *kalām*. Known for his chronicle, which is a continuation of the work of his teacher, Ibn al-Zāghūnī.

al-Ṣafadī, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak (d. 764/1363): Philologist, littérateur, and biographer who met Ibn Taymiyya as a young man. Wrote innumerable works, including the 22-volume biographical encyclopedia *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*.

al-Ṣanʿānī, ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Hammām (d. 211/827): Renowned Yemeni scholar who taught Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. His surviving works are important for the study of early Islamic law, *ḥadīth*, and exegesis because they cite older sources and material that have otherwise been lost.

al-Ṣanʿānī, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl (d. 1182/1768): Born outside Sanaa, Yemen. Articulated a juristic philosophy that stressed the need for evidence and proof in adducing verdicts. His commentary on Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's *Bulūgh al-marām* stands as one of the most popular commentaries on the text today.

al-Sanūsī, Muḥammad b. Yūsuf (d. 895/1490): Prominent late Ashʿarī theologian and Sufi whose works were widely taught up through the nineteenth century. His *Ṣughrā al-ṣughrā* sets out the essentials of belief on the basis of methodical argumentation.

al-Shaʿbī, Abū ʿAmr ʿĀmir b. Sharāḥīl (d. between 104/722 or 723 and 106/724 or 725): Successor (*tābiʿī*) and early *muḥaddith* who reported *ḥadīth* from several prominent Companions, including Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ and Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī. Reports that he knew five hundred of the Prophet's Companions.

al-Shāfiʿī, Muḥammad b. Idrīs (d. 204/820): Iconic jurist and theologian, student of Mālik b. Anas, and eponym of the Shāfiʿī school of law. Defined Sunna strictly as that of the Prophet, augmented the importance of *ḥadīth* as a fundamental source of law, and helped systematize legal reasoning in the form of juridical analogy (*qiyās*).

al-Shahrastānī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm (d. 548/1153): Ashʿarī theologian and historian most known for his work *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, a non-polemical study of religious communities and philosophies that is often considered the first systematic study of religion.

al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (*see* al-Jurjānī)

al-Shawkānī, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d. 1250/1834): Writer, teacher, and *muftī* from Yemen whose work *al-Badr al-ṭāliʿ bi-maḥāsin man baʿda al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* contains important information on the biography of Ibn Taymiyya.

al-Shīrāzī, Abū al-Faraj (*see* al-Maqdisī, Abū al-Faraj)

al-Shīrāzī, Ṣadr al-Dīn (Mullā Ṣadrā) (d. 1050/1640): Persian Shīʿī philosopher, theologian, and mystic who laid the basis for a new school of theosophical Shīʿism known as *al-ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya*, or "transcendent theosophy."

Sībawayhi, Abū Bishr ʿAmr b. ʿUthmān (d. ca. 180/796): Early grammarian of Persian origin whose only known work, *Kitāb Sībawayhi*, is the founding text of the science of Arabic grammar.

al-Ṣibghī, Abū Bakr b. Isḥāq (d. 342/953 or 954): Shāfiʿī jurist and *muḥaddith* from Nishapur. Authored a number of texts on theological matters, including works on the names and attributes of God, the nature of faith, and the divine decree.

al-Sijistānī (*also* **al-Sijzī**[2]**), Abū Yaʿqūb** (d. ca. 361/971): Persian Ismāʿīlī ("Bāṭinī") missionary, Neoplatonic philosopher, and theologian who was executed by the Saffarid governor of Sijistan.

al-Sijzī, Abū Naṣr (d. 444/1052): Ḥanafī scholar from Sijistan who wrote a refutation of those who denied that the letters and sounds of the recited Qurʾān were constitutive of God's word (*kalām Allāh*).

al-Ṣīrāfī, Abū Saʿīd (d. 368/979): Theologian, jurist, and philologist who is best known for his two works on grammar and his debate with the logician Mattā b. Yūnus on the relationship between, and the relative merits of, Arabic grammar and Aristotelian logic.

al-Subkī, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn (d. 725/1325): Ashʿarī jurist and grandfather of the famed Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī.

al-Subkī, Tāj al-Dīn (*also* **Ibn al-Subkī)** (d. 771/1370): Author of the great Shāfiʿī biographical dictionary *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, as well as a compendium of legal theory, *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. Was a sharp critic of Ibn Taymiyya's theological views, especially the doctrine that God is literally "upward" with respect to creation.

al-Subkī, Taqī al-Dīn (d. 756/1355): Chief *qāḍī* of Syria and father of Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī. Was greatly esteemed for his mastery of various fields, including language, exegesis, jurisprudence, and *ḥadīth*. Was highly critical of Ibn Taymiyya and wrote several tracts in refutation of him and his student, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.

Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 198/814): Famous early *muḥaddith*, exegete, and jurist from Mecca. Belonged to the generation of the Successors of the Successors (*tābiʿū al-tābiʿīn*). Al-Dhahabī refers to him as "*shaykh al-Islām*."

al-Suhrawardī, Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar (d. 632/1234): Important Sufi figure who advocated a strong relationship between Sufism and the caliphate. Left behind a large body of writings, including a famous comprehensive handbook of Sufism, *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*. Not to be confused with Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl (see following entry).

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[2] The name "al-Sijzī" is a common shorthand form of the *nisba* adjective "al-Sijistānī," in reference to those who hail from the region of Sijistan in eastern Iran.

al-Suhrawardī (al-Maqtūl), Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā (executed 587/1191): Persian mystic put to death for heresy in Aleppo. Founder of the Ishrāqī ("Illuminationist") school of philosophy, which incorporated Zoroastrian and Platonic elements and arose as an alternative to the Peripatetic tradition of mainstream *falsafa*. Not to be confused with (Shihāb al-Dīn) Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (see previous entry).

al-Ṣuʿlūkī, Abū Sahl (d. 369/980): Shāfiʿī legal scholar during the formative period of the school. Taught law, theology, and *ḥadīth* in Nishapur.

Sunayd b. Dāwūd, al-Ḥusayn (d. 226/840 or 841): Early *muḥaddith* and exegete. Narrated *ḥadīth* from ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak, Ḥammād b. Zayd, and Abū Bakr b. ʿAyyāsh, among others.

al-Surramarrī, Abū al-Muẓaffar Jamāl al-Dīn (d. 776/1374): Ḥanbalī scholar and *ḥadīth* master ("*ḥāfiẓ*"). Younger contemporary of Ibn Taymiyya in Damascus. Authored more than one hundred works on law, *ḥadīth*, and other subjects.

al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn (d. 911/1505): Shāfiʿī jurist from Egypt and the most prolific author in the corpus of Islamic literature. Wrote extensively on the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, history, biography, and other topics. Famously defended both Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn ʿArabī. Wrote an epitome of Ibn Taymiyya's *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn* called *Jahd al-qarīḥa fī tajrīd al-Naṣīḥa*.

T

al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr (d. 310/923): Shāfiʿī jurist, historian, and famous exegete celebrated for his forty-volume historical chronicle and his voluminous compendium of Qurʾān commentary. Was also the founder of his own, short-lived legal school.

al-Taftāzānī, Saʿd al-Dīn (d. 793/1390): Ashʿarī scholar who wrote on grammar, rhetoric, theology, logic, law, and exegesis. Many of his writings are commentaries that were widely used as textbooks in madrasas. Wrote on both Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī law (it is not clear to which school he belonged).

al-Ṭaḥāwī, Abū Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad (d. 321/933): Former Shāfiʿī who became one of the top Ḥanafī authorities of his day, as well as a leading scholar of *ḥadīth*. Most famous today for his statement of creed, known as *al-ʿAqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya*.

al-Ṭalamankī, Abū ʿUmar (d. 429/1038): Andalusian scholar who wrote on theology, the Qurʾānic sciences, and asceticism. Taught a large number of students.

Taşköprüzade, Ahmet Efendi (d. 968/1561): Ottoman historian and chronicler. Wrote a famous biographical dictionary of Ottoman scholars called *al-Shaqāʾiq al-Nuʿmāniyya fī ʿulamāʾ al-dawla al-ʿUthmāniyya*.

al-Thaqafī, Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad (d. 328/940): Shāfiʿī jurist and ascetic. Highly praised by his contemporaries, with some describing him as the "proof of God" (*ḥujjat Allāh*) of his era.

Themistius (d. 387 CE): Hellenic philosopher and statesman who lived most of his life in Constantinople. Known in Arabic mainly as a commentator on Aristotle. Ibn al-Nadīm bills him “a scribe of Julian the Apostate.”

al-Tilimsānī, ʿAfīf al-Dīn (d. 690/1291): Sufi poet and follower of Ibn ʿArabī. Wrote a commentary on the Most Beautiful Names of God (*asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*) as well as an epistle on poetic meter and prose.

al-Ṭūfī, Najm al-Dīn (d. 716/1316): Ḥanbalī legal scholar who was partial to rationalist *kalām* theology of the Ashʿarī type and was accused of having Shīʿī leanings. Known in particular for his theory of *maṣlaḥa*, or public interest, in law.

al-Tustarī, Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 283/896): Influential Sufi whose thought was immersed in Qurʾānic exegesis. Only two works attributed to him have survived, a *tafsīr* and a collection of aphorisms.

U

Ubayy b. Kaʿb (d. ca. 35/656): Served as a scribe to the Prophet in Medina. Knew the Qurʾān by heart and was one of the few to set it down in writing during the Prophet’s lifetime. Played an active role as an early collector and transmitter of the Qurʾān.

ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 101/720): Fifth Umayyad caliph, revered for his piety. Has sometimes been referred to as the fifth Rightly Guided Caliph. Often celebrated as the embodiment of a just and pious ruler.

al-Urmawī, Sirāj al-Dīn (d. 682/1283): Shāfiʿī logician and scholar of legal theory. Author of several works in logic, legal theory, and theology as well a commentary on Ibn Sīnā’s *Ishārāt*.

ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām (d. 93/711 or 712 *or* 94/712 or 713): Successor (*tābiʿī*), respected *muḥaddith*, and one of the so-called Seven Jurists of Medina. Was also a recognized authority on the early history of Islam and composed one of the first writings on the Prophet’s biography (no longer extant, but known to us through the famous *Sīra* of Ibn Isḥāq).

W

Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/812): Renowned *muḥaddith* from Iraq. His works include a *tafsīr*, a collection of *ḥadīth*, the historical work *al-Maʿrifa wa-l-tārīkh*, and numerous other writings.

al-Walīd b. Yazīd (al-Walīd II) (r. 125–126/743–744): Umayyad caliph who faced opposition throughout his brief reign and was killed during a short siege on his palace. The Qadarī doctrine gained ascendancy for a brief time during the political revolt against his rule.

al-Wāqidī, Muḥammad b. ʿUmar (d. 207/823): Historian, legal scholar, and frequently cited authority on early Islamic history. Known for his *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*.

Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/748 or 749): Theologian and ascetic known primarily as the founder of the Muʿtazilī school of theology. Very little is known about his life, and none of his writings have been preserved.

al-Wāthiq, Abū Jaʿfar Hārūn b. Muḥammad (r. 227–232/842–847): Ninth Abbasid caliph and last of the three who presided over the execution of the *miḥna*.

Y

Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī (d. 363/974): Syriac Jacobite Christian translator, logician, and student of al-Fārābī who translated and commented on works of Aristotle. In some of his treatises, he applied the methodology of demonstrative logic to *kalām* concepts.

Yūḥannā b. Ḥaylān (fl. early fourth/tenth century): Nestorian Christian scholar who came to Baghdad from Marv during the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir bi-Llāh (r. 295–320/908–932). Was one of the teachers of al-Fārābī.

Z

al-Ẓāhirī, Dāwūd b. Khalaf al-Aṣbahānī (d. 270/884): Freed slave of the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī. Well-known jurist with strongly literalist views (hence "al-Ẓāhirī"). Held the Qurʾān to be created, earning him broad scholarly condemnation. Known for a number of idiosyncratic views.

Zayd b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 122/740): Great-grandson of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. Narrated *ḥadīth* from his father, Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, and his brother, al-Bāqir, among others. Praised in Sunnī sources for refusing to impugn Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.

al-Zinjānī, Abū al-Qāsim Saʿd b. ʿAlī (d. 471/1078): Sufi scholar, *ḥadīth* master ("*ḥāfiẓ*"), and shaykh of the *ḥaram*, known for his ascetic piety.

Zuhayr al-Atharī (death date unknown): Relatively obscure Murjiʾī figure. Held that God is everywhere in His essence but simultaneously "seated upon the throne" and that God is not a body. Held that the Qurʾān, as God's speech, was originated in time (*muḥdath*) but not created (*makhlūq*). Affirmed the faith (*īmān*) of the grave sinner and adopted Muʿtazilī views on the divine decree (*qadar*).

al-Zuhrī, Ibn Shihāb (d. 124/742): Early advocate of documenting *ḥadīth*, is often credited with having been the first to compile a *sunan* work at the request of ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. Noted also for his mastery of jurisprudence. Mentioned with admiration and reverence by his contemporaries and successors.

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N.B.: Definite and indefinite articles have been disregarded for alphabetization purposes, with the exception of Arabic names of contemporary authors who have published in a Roman-script language (e.g., Al-Azmeh, El-Rouayheb).

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Index of Arabic Passages

The following index provides the original Arabic of selected passages in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ* that appear in this work in English translation. Passages from authors other than Ibn Taymiyya are reproduced as cited by Ibn Taymiyya in the *Darʾ*. In most cases, Ibn Taymiyya's citation of these passages is identical to how they appear in the authors' own original works (as attested in either published or manuscript[1] form). Any discrepancies (invariably minor and of little or no consequence for the meaning) are indicated below in footnotes. Passages are listed by page number in the order of their appearance in this book.

Passages from Ibn Taymiyya in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*

p. 107	فأراد هؤلاء أن يجمعوا بين نصر ما اشتهر عند أهل السنة والحديث وبين موافقة الجهمية في تلك الأصول العقلية التي ظنها صحيحة، ولم يكن لهم من الخبرة المفصلة بالقرآن ومعانيه والحديث وأقوال الصحابة ما لأئمة السنة والحديث فذهب مذهبا مركبا من هذا وهذا وكلا الطائفتين ينسبه إلى التناقض.
p. 107, n. 114	ولما كان الأشعري ونحوه أقرب إلى السنة من طوائف من أهل الكلام كان انتسابه إلى أحمد أكثر من غيره كما هو معروف في كتبه.
p. 108	[الشهرستاني ... والقاضي أبو بكر وأبو المعالي والقاضي أبو يعلى وابن الزاغوني وأبو الحسين البصري ومحمد بن الهيصم[2] ونحو هؤلاء من أعيان الفضلاء المصنفين] تجد أحدهم يذكر في مسألة القرآن أو نحوها عدة أقوال للأمة ويختار واحدا منها والقول الثابت عن السلف والأئمة كالإمام أحمد ونحوه من الأئمة لا يذكره الواحد منهم، مع أن عامة المنتسبين إلى السنة من جميع الطوائف يقولون إنهم متّبعون للأئمة كمالك والشافعي وأحمد وابن المبارك وحماد بن زيد وغيرهم.
p. 109	ثم إنه ما من هؤلاء إلا من له في الإسلام مساع مشكورة وحسنات مبرورة وله في الرد على كثير من أهل الإلحاد والبدع والانتصار لكثير من أهل السنة والدين ما لا يخفى على من عرف أحوالهم وتكلم فيهم بعلم وصدق وعدل وإنصاف.
p. 109	لكن لما التبس عليهم هذا الأصل المأخوذ ابتداء عن المعتزلة وهم فضلاء عقلاء احتاجوا إلى طرده والتزام لوازمه فلزمهم بسبب ذلك من الأقوال ما أنكره المسلمون من أهل العلم والدين، وصار الناس بسبب ذلك منهم من يعظمهم لما لهم من المحاسن والفضائل ومنهم من يذمهم لما وقع في كلامهم من البدع والباطل، وخيار الأمور أوساطها.

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[1] As catalogued by Muḥammad Rashād Sālim (ed. of the *Darʾ*) in the critical notes he provides for the passages in question.

[2] Ibn Taymiyya has "al-Haytham," but Sālim corrects this to "al-Hayṣam." See *Darʾ*, 2:307, n. 1.

p. 124

يميل [ابن رشد] إلى باطنية الفلاسفة الذين يوجبون إقرار الجمهور على الظاهر كما يفعل ذلك من يقول بقولهم من أهل الكلام والفقه والحديث. ليس هو من باطنية الشيعة كالإسماعيلية ونحوهم الذين يظهرون الإلحاد ويتظاهرون بخلاف شرائع الإسلام، وهو في نفي الصفات أسوأ حالا من المعتزلة وأمثالهم، بمنزلة إخوانه الفلاسفة الباطنية.

p. 129, n. 200

وإنما يحصل النور والهدى بأن يقابل الفاسد بالصالح والباطل بالحق والبدعة بالسنة والضلال بالهدى والكذب بالصدق، وبذلك يتبين أن الأدلة الصحيحة لا تعارض بحال وأن المعقول الصريح مطابق للمنقول الصحيح.

pp. 132–133

قول القائل: إذا تعارضت الأدلة السمعية والعقلية أو السمع والعقل أو النقل والعقل أو الظواهر النقلية والقواطع العقلية أو نحو ذلك من العبارات فإما أن يجمع بينهما وهو محال لأنه جمع بين النقيضين وإما أن يردّا جميعا وإما أن يقدَّم السمع وهو محال لأن العقل أصل للسمع، فلو قدمناه عليه كان ذلك قدحا في العقل الذي هو أصل النقل والقدح في أصل الشيء قدح فيه، فكان تقديم النقل قدحا في النقل والعقل جميعا فوجب تقديم العقل ثم النقل إما أن يتأول وإما أن يفوَّض.

p. 153

أن يقال: إذا تعارض الشرع والعقل وجب تقديم الشرع لأن العقل مصدِّق للشرع في كل ما أخبر به والشرع لم يصدق العقل في كل ما أخبر به ولا العلم بصدقه موقوف على كل ما يخبر به العقل.

pp. 154–155

هذا القرآن أو الحكمة الذي بلغته إلينا قد تضمن أشياء كثيرة تناقض ما علمنا بعقولنا، ونحن إنما علمنا صدقك بعقولنا فلو قبلنا جميع ما تقوله مع أن عقولنا تناقض ذلك لكان ذلك قدحا فيما علمنا به صدقك، فنحن نعتقد موجب الأقوال المناقضة لما ظهر من كلامك وكلامك نعرض عنه لا نتلقى منه هدى ولا علما.

p. 169

يعلم أهل العقل المتصفون بصريح العقل أن في المنطق من الخطأ البين ما لا ريب فيه، كما ذكر في غير هذا الموضع. وأما كلامه [أرسطو] وكلام أتباعه كالإسكندر الأفروديسي وبرقلس وثامسطيوس والفارابي وابن سينا والسهروردي المقتول وابن رشد الحفيد وأمثالهم في الإلهيات فما فيه من الخطأ الكثير والتقصير العظيم ظاهر لجمهور عقلاء بني آدم بل في كلامهم من التناقض ما لا يكاد يستقصى.

p. 192, n. 45

فالعلم بالاستواء من باب التفسير وهو التأويل الذي نعلمه، وأما الكيف فهو التأويل الذي لا يعلمه إلا الله وهو المجهول لنا.

p. 211, n. 103

فالأدلة الدالة على العلم لا يجوز أن تكون متناقضة متعارضة، وهذا مما لا ينازع فيه أحد من العقلاء. ومن صار من أهل الكلام إلى القول بتكافؤ الأدلة والحيرة فإنما ذاك لفساد استدلاله، إما لتقصيره وإما لفساد دليله؛ ومن أعظم أسباب ذلك الألفاظ المجملة التي تشتبه معانيها.

p. 245

[وإنما يثبت العقليات المجردة في الخارج الغالطون من المتفلسفة] كالفيثاغورية الذين يثبتون العدد المجرد والأفلاطونية الذين يثبتون المُثل الأفلاطونية، وهي الماهيات المجردة والهيولى المجردة والمدة المجردة والخلاء المجرد. وأما أرسطو وأصحابه كالفارابي وابن سينا فأبطلوا قول سلفهم في إثباتها مجردة عن الأعيان ولكن أثبتوها مقارنة للأعيان، فجعلوا مع الأجسام المحسوسة جواهر معقولة كالمادة والصورة، وإذا حقق الأمر عليهم لم يوجد في الخارج إلا الجسم وأعراضه. وأثبتوا في الخارج أيضا الكليات مقارنة للأعيان، وإذا حقق الأمر عليهم لم يوجد في الخارج إلا الأعيان بصفاتها القائمة بها.

pp. 245–246

فهذا الإنسان لم يوافق هذا في نفس إنسانيته وإنما وافقه في إنسانية مطلقة، وتلك المطلقة يمتنع أن تقوم بالمعيَّن؛ فالتي وافقه فيها يمتنع أن تكون بعينها موجودة في الخارج فضلا عن أن تكون مقوِّمة لشيء من الأشياء، والأشياء المعينة لا تقوَّم بها ولا يقوِّمها إلا ما هو مختص بها لا يَشركها فيه غيره.

pp. 251–252

لكن الروح معينة والبدن معين ومقارنة أحدهما الآخر ممكن، وهؤلاء يشتبه عليهم مقارنة الروح للبدن وتجريدها عنه بمقارنة الكليات المعقولة لجزئياتها وتجريدها عنها، والفرق بين هذا وهذا أبين من أن يحتاج إلى بسط. وهم يلتبس عليهم أحدهما بالآخر فيأخذون لفظ «التجريد» و«المقارنة» بالاشتراك ويقولون: العقول المفارقة للمادة، ولا يميزون بين كون الروح قد تكون مقارنة للبدن وبين المعقولات الكلية التي لا تتوقف على وجودِ معين، فإن الروح – التي هي النفس الناطقة – موجودة في الخارج قائم بنفسه [*sic*] إذا فارقت البدن. وأما العقليات الكلية المنتزعة من المعينات فإنما هي في الأذهان لا في الأعيان، فيجب الفرق بين تجريد الروح عن البدن وتجريد الكليات عن المعينات.

pp. 253–254

فما أفاده الحس معينا يفيده العقل والقياس كليا مطلقا فهو لا يفيد بنفسه علم شيء معين لكن يجعل الخاص عاما والمعين مطلقا، فإن الكليات إنما تعلم بالعقل كما أن المعينات إنما تعلم بالإحساس.

p. 275, n. 161

العلم بحدوث ما يَحدث والاستدلال به على ثبوت الصانع ليس مفتقرا إلى أن يُعلم هل في النطفة جواهر منفردة أو مادة وهل ذلك قديم أو حادث، بل مجرد حدوث ما شهد حدوثه يدل على أن له محدثا كما يدل حدوث سائر الحوادث على أن لها محدثا.

Passages from authors other than Ibn Taymiyya (as cited in the *Darʾ*)

al-Juwaynī, *al-ʿAqīda al-Niẓāmiyya*

p. 111	ذهب أئمة السلف إلى الانكفاف عن التأويل وإجراء الظواهر على مواردها وتفويض معانيها إلى الرب تعالى، والذي نرتضيه رأيا وندين الله به عقلا اتباع سلف الأمة فالأولى الاتباع وترك الابتداع.

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-l-zanādiqa*

pp. 115–116	الحمد لله الذي جعل في كل زمان فترة من الرسل بقايا من أهل العلم يدعون من ضل إلى الهدى ويصبرون منهم على الأذى، يحيون بكتاب الله الموتى ويبصّرون بنور الله أهل العمى، فكم من قتيل لإبليس قد أحيوه وكم من ضال تائه قد هدوه، فما أحسن أثرهم على الناس وأقبح أثر الناس عليهم، ينفون عن كتاب الله تحريف الغالين وانتحال المبطلين وتأويل الجاهلين الذين عقدوا ألوية البدعة وأطلقوا عنان الفتنة، فهم مختلفون في الكتاب، مخالفون للكتاب، متفقون على مفارقة الكتاب، يقولون على الله وفي الله وفي كتاب الله بغير علم، يتكلمون بالمتشابه من الكلام ويخدعون جُهّال الناس بما يلبّسون عليهم، فنعوذ بالله من فتن المضلين.

Ibn Sīnā, *al-Aḍḥawiyya fī al-maʿād*

p. 120	الإقرار بالصانع موحدا مقدسا عن الكم والكيف والأين ومتى والوضع والتغير، حتى يصير الاعتقاد به أنه ذات واحدة لا يمكن أن يكون لها شريك في النوع أو يكون لها جزء وجودي كمي أو معنوي، ولا يمكن أن تكون خارجة عن العالم ولا داخلة فيه ولا حيث تصح الإشارة إليه أنه هنا أو هناك.[3]
pp. 120–121	ولو ألقي هذا على هذه الصورة إلى العرب العاربة أو العبرانيين الأجلاف لتسارعوا إلى العناد واتفقوا على أن الإيمان المدعو إليه إيمان بمعدوم أصلا.[4]
p. 121	هب أن هذه كلها موجودة على الاستعارة فأين التوحيد والعبارة المشيرة بالتصريح إلى التوحيد المحض الذي تدعو إليه حقيقة هذا الدين القيم المعترف بجلالته على لسان حكماء العالم قاطبة؟[5]
p. 121	فظاهر من هذا كله أن الشرائع واردة بخطاب الجمهور بما يفهمون، مقربا ما لا يفهمون إلى أفهامهم بالتمثيل والتشبيه، ولو كان غير ذلك لما أغنت الشرائع البتة.[6]

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[3] Ibn Sīnā: "*bi-ḥaythu taṣiḥḥu*" (in addition to "*ḥaythu taṣiḥḥu*"); "*annahu hunāka*"

[4] Ibn Sīnā: "*wa-l-ajlāf*" and "*min al-ajlāf*"; "*īmān maʿdūm*" (in addition to "*īmān bi-maʿdūm*")

[5] Ibn Sīnā: "*maʾkhūdha ʿalā al-istiʿāra*"; "*fa-ayna al-nuṣūṣ* [also: *al-nuṣūṣ al-tawḥīdiyya*] *al-mushīra ilā al-taṣrīḥ bi-l-tawḥīd al-maḥḍ*"

[6] Ibn Sīnā: "*li-khiṭāb*"

Ibn Rushd, *al-Kashf ʿan manāhij al-adilla*

p. 122
[فقد ظهر لك من هذا أن] إثبات الجهة واجب بالشرع والعقل وأنه الذي جاء به الشرع وانبنى
عليه فإن إبطال هذه القاعدة إبطال للشرائع.[7]

p. 123
فإن المقصود الأول في العلم في حق الجمهور إنما هو العمل فما كان أنفع في العمل فهو أجدر،
فأما المقصود بالعلم في حق العلماء فهو الأمران جميعا: أعني العلم والعمل.[8]

al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*

p. 126
وحد الاقتصاد بين هذا الانحلال كله وبين جمود الحنابلة دقيق غامض لا يطلع عليه إلا
الموفقون الذين يدركون الأمور بنور إلهي لا بالسماع، ثم إذا انكشفت لهم أسرار الأمور على ما
هي عليه نظروا إلى السمع والألفاظ الواردة فما وافق ما شاهدوه بنور اليقين قرروه وما خالف
أولوه.

al-Khūnajī (as reported by al-Tilimsānī in *Sharḥ Mawāqif al-Niffarī*)[9]

p. 146
ابن تيمية: أموت ولم أعرف شيئا إلا أن الممكن مفتقر إلى الممتنع [ثم قال] الافتقار وصف
سلبي: أموت ولم أعرف شيئا.

التلمساني: وقد نقل إلي من حضر وفاة الأفضل الخونجي رحمه الله وسمع منه عند الموت قوله:
«نهاية ما وصلت إليه أني علمت أني لا أعلم شيئا غير مسألة واحدة وهو كون هذا المصنوع
مفتقر [*sic*] إلى صانع» والفقر يرجع عندي أنا إلى أمر سلبي فما علم شيئا أصلا.

al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*

p. 146
فألزمهم تارة مذهب المعتزلة وأخرى مذهب الكرامية وطورا مذهب الواقفية ولا أتنهض ذابا
عن مذهب مخصوص.

al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl*

p. 152
فثبت أن العلم بالأصول التي يتوقف على صحتها نبوة محمد عليه السلام علم جلي ظاهر وإنما طال
الكلام في هذه الأصول لرفع هذه الشكوك التي يثبتها المبطلون ... فثبت أن أصول الإسلام
جلية ظاهرة، ثم إن أدلتها على الاستقصاء مذكورة في كتاب الله تعالى خالية عما يتوهم معارضا
لها.[10]

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[7] Ibn Rushd: "*wa-anna ibṭāl*"

[8] Ibn Rushd: "*bi-l-ʿilm*"; "*wa-ammā*"

[9] I include the original quotation from al-Tilimsānī's *Sharḥ* here after Ibn Taymiyya's paraphrase of it in the *Darʾ*, as it is clear that he reproduces the passage only loosely.

[10] Al-Rāzī: "*li-dafʿ hādhihi al-shukūk allatī laffaqahā*"

al-Ḥillī, *Nihāyat al-wuṣūl ilā ʿilm al-uṣūl*

p. 194, n. 52 [وفيه نظر لـ]عدم اختصاص الظاهر بما دل بالأصل أو العرف، بل كل لفظ ترجح معنى فيه فهو ظاهر بالنسبة إليه.

Index of *Ḥadīth*

Page ref.	**Text of *ḥadīth***
199	"The Black Stone is the right hand of God on earth; whoever shakes it and kisses it, it is as if he had shaken and kissed the right hand of God."
175	"Disputation (*mirāʾ*) with respect to the Qurʾān is disbelief."
261, 261 n.117, 296 n.27	"Every child is born on [i.e., in a state of] the *fiṭra*, then his parents turn him into a Jew or a Christian—just as camels are reproduced from a whole [and sound] animal: do you find any among them that are maimed?" variant: "turn him into a Jew or a Christian or a Magian" variant: "born on the creed/religion (*ʿalā al-milla*)" variant: "born on this creed/religion, until his tongue [is able to] express it (*yubayyina ʿanhu*)" variant: "born on this *fiṭra*, until his tongue [is able to] express it (*yuʿabbira ʿanhu*)" variant: "do you find any among them that are maimed until you go and maim them?"
29 n.29	"For whomever God desires good, He grants him understanding in religion."
282 n.9	"God, blessed and exalted is He, has said, 'I have prepared for my righteous servants that which no eye has seen, nor ear has heard, nor has occurred to the heart of any man.'"
232	The *ḥadīth* of Gabriel: In the words of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (as narrated by his son): "One day when we were with the Messenger of God,[1] a man came upon us with bright white clothes and pitch black hair. No signs of travel could be seen upon him, yet none of us knew him. He sat before the Prophet, pressed his knees against [the Prophet's] knees, and placed his hands upon his thighs. He then said, 'O Muḥammad! Tell me about *islām* (submission).' The Messenger of God replied, '*Islām* is to testify that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, to perform the prayer, to give alms, to fast the month of Ramaḍān, and to perform pilgrimage to the House [i.e., the Kaʿba] if you are able to.' The man replied, 'You are correct.'" ʿUmar said, "We found it strange that he should ask him [the Prophet] then confirm his response. Then the man said, 'Tell me about *īmān* (faith).' The Prophet replied, '*Īmān* is to believe in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the last day, and to believe in the divine decree (*qadar*), the good of it and the bad.' He said, 'You are correct.' Then he said, 'Tell me about *iḥsān* (excellence).' The Prophet replied, '*Iḥsān* is to worship God as if you saw Him, for if you see Him not, [know that] surely He sees you.' Then the man said, 'Tell me about the Hour.' The Prophet replied, 'The one being inquired has no more knowledge of it than the one inquiring.' So he said, 'Then tell me about its signs.' The Prophet replied,

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[1] The original version of the *ḥadīth* includes the standard phrase "May the peace and blessings of God be upon him" (*ṣallā Llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam*) each time the name of the Prophet is mentioned.

'[Among its signs are] that a slave girl will give birth to her mistress and that you will see barefoot, naked, destitute shepherds vying with one another in the construction of tall buildings.'" 'Umar said, "Then he left, and I stayed back awhile. Then the Prophet said to me, ''Umar, do you know who the inquirer was?' I replied, 'God and His Messenger know best.' He said, 'It was Gabriel, who came to teach you your religion.'"

282 n.10 It was related that the Prophet saw a group of people and asked them, "What are you doing?" They replied, "We are pondering on the Creator." He said to them, "Ponder over His creation but ponder not on the Creator, [for] you cannot encompass His immensity."

26 "Satan shall come to you and say, 'Who created this?' and 'Who created that?' until he says, 'Who created your Lord?' So if anyone of you should reach this point, let him seek refuge in God and desist."

variant: "… let him say, 'I have believed in God and His messengers.'"

variant: "People will continue to pose questions until they ask, 'Who created God?'"

174 n.107 "The scholars are the heirs of the prophets. The prophets bequeathed neither *dīnār* nor *dirham*; rather, they bequeathed knowledge. So whoever takes it [prophetic knowledge] has taken a generous share."

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Index of Qurʾānic Verses

Verse no.	Page ref.	Translation of verse or relevant verse segment[1]
al-Baqara		
2:3	27 n.24	“those who believe in the unseen (*al-ghayb*)”
2:29	203 n.74	“then He directed Himself (*istawā*) towards the heaven”
2:30	24 n.8	“Truly, I [God] know what you know not”
2:105	214 n.110	“And God singles out (*yakhtaṣṣu*) for His mercy whom He will”
2:163	219, 219 n.120	“And your God is one God (*ilāhun wāḥid*); there is no god but He, the Most Merciful, the Compassionate”
2:185	25 n.13	“The month of Ramaḍān is that in which the Qurʾān was sent down as guidance to mankind, as clear proofs of guidance, and as a criterion of judgement (*furqān*)”
2:210	121	“Do they await anything other than that God and the angels should come to them in the shadows of clouds and that the matter be settled?”
2:216	24 n.8, 25 n.11	“And God knows and you know not”
2:232	24 n.8, 25 n.11	“And God knows and you know not”
2:247	212 n.107	“Indeed, God has chosen him [Ṭālūt] over you and increased him abundantly in knowledge and body (*jism*) [i.e., stature]”
2:266	218 n.113	“Would one of you (*aḥadukum*) like that he should have a garden of palm trees and grapes”
Āl ʿImrān		
3:4	25 n.13	“and He sent down the Criterion (*al-Furqān*)”
3:7	99 n.74, 99 n.75, 123 n.176, 123 n.177, 183, 184, 185, 186, 189–190	“He it is who has sent down to you (O Muḥammad) the Book. In it are verses that are *muḥkam*; they are the mother of the Book. Others are *mutashābih*. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is *mutashābih*, seeking discord and searching for its *taʾwīl*; and none knows its *taʾwīl* save God. And those firmly grounded in knowledge say, ‘We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord.’ And none shall grasp the message save men of understanding” (Yusuf Ali, with modifications)
3:44	234 n.27	“That is from the news of the unseen (*anbāʾ al-ghayb*) that We reveal unto you”
3:45	35 n.57	“O Mary! God sends you glad tidings of a word (*kalima*) from Him whose name is the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary”
3:55	203 n.74	“when God said, ‘O Jesus! I will take you back and raise you unto Me’ ”
3:66	24 n.8, 25 n.11, 174	“Behold! You are those who dispute concerning that whereof you have knowledge; so why do you dispute concerning that whereof you have no knowledge? And God knows and you know not”

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[1] All translations are mine except where indicated in parentheses. “*SQ*” denotes *The Study Quran*.

3:98–99	175 n.118	"(98) Say, 'O people of the book! Why do you disbelieve in the signs of God, while God is a witness over what you do?' (99) Say, 'O people of the book! Why do you divert from the way of God those who believe and seek to make it crooked, while you are witnesses?'"
3:99	176 n.119	
3:108	36 n.58	"And God wills no wrong for the worlds [i.e., His creation]"
3:117	36 n.58	"And God wronged them not; rather, it is they who wrong themselves"
3:138	25 n.14, 182 n.8	"This [Qurʾān] is an elucidation (*bayān*) for mankind, and guidance, and an admonishment for the God-fearing"

al-Nisāʾ

4:11	218 n.113	"and if there be (only) one (*wāḥida*) [female heir], then she receives half"
4:17	24 n.8	"God only accepts the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance (*bi-jahāla*) and then turn quickly in repentance" (SQ)
4:46	193 n.49	"Among those who are Jews are those who distort the meaning of the word (*yuḥarrifūna l-kalima ʿan mawāḍiʿihi*)" (SQ)
4:82	2 n.2, 23 n.2	"Do they not consider (*yatadabbarūn*) the Qurʾān (with care)? Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy" (Yusuf Ali)
4:158	203 n.74	"Rather, God raised him [Jesus] up to Himself"
4:174	25 n.12, 182 n.8	"O mankind! Verily there has come to you an evincive proof (*burhān*) from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a clear light (*nūran mubīnan*)"

al-Māʾida

5:13	193 n.49	"they distort the meaning of the word (*yuḥarrifūna l-kalima ʿan mawāḍiʿihi*)" (SQ)
5:15	182 n.8	"There has come to you from God a light and a clear Book (*kitāb mubīn*)"
5:50	24 n.8	"Is it the judgement of the Age of Ignorance (al-Jāhiliyya) that they seek?"
5:109	230 n.12	"Verily, You are the One with full knowledge of unseen matters (*ʿallām al-ghuyūb*)"
5:116	230 n.12	"Verily, You are the One with full knowledge of unseen matters (*ʿallām al-ghuyūb*)"

al-Anʿām

6:3	202, 203	"And He is God in the heavens and on the earth"
6:18	203 n.74	"And He is the dominant one over His servants (*fawqa ʿibādihi*), and He is the wise, the aware"
6:59	3 n.4	"And not a leaf falls but that He knows it"
6:73	230 n.11	"Knower of the unseen and the seen" (*ʿālim al-ghayb wa-l-shahāda*)
6:130	175 n.113	"'O company of *jinn* and mankind! Did not messengers come unto you from among yourselves, recounting unto you My signs and warning you of the meeting with this your day?' They will say, 'We bear witness against ourselves.' The life of this world deluded them, and they bear witness against themselves that they were disbelievers." (SQ, with modifications)

al-Aʿrāf

7:33	174	"that you say of God that which you know not"
7:35–36	175 n.113	"(35) O Children of Adam! Should there come unto you messengers from among yourselves, recounting My signs unto you, then whosoever is reverent and makes amends, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve. (36) But those who deny Our signs and treat them with disdain, it is they who are the inhabitants of the Fire. They shall abide therein." (SQ)

7:45	176 n.119	"those who divert from the path of God and seek to make it crooked and who disbelieve in the hereafter"
7:54	191	"then He settled upon the throne" (*thumma stawā ʿalā l-ʿarsh*)
7:86	175 n.118, 176 n.119	"And lie not in wait on every path, threatening and diverting from the way of God those who believe in Him and seeking to make it crooked"
7:148	212 n.107	"And Moses's people, after he [had gone], took a calf [made] of their ornaments—a body (*jasadan*) that lowed" (*SQ*, with modifications)
7:169	174	"Was not the covenant of the Book taken from them that they would ascribe naught to God but the truth?"
7:172	238 n.38	"And when thy Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their progeny and made them bear witness concerning themselves, 'Am I not your Lord?' they said, 'Yea, we bear witness'—lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Truly of this we were heedless'" (*SQ*)
7:176	2 n.3, 24 n.7	"perchance they may reflect" (*laʿallahum yatafakkarūn*)
7:180	193 n.50	"And leave those who deviate (*yulḥidūn*) with regard to His names" (*SQ*)
al-Anfāl		
8:6	174	"They dispute with you (O Muḥammad) concerning the truth after it was made manifest"
al-Tawba		
9:6	218 n.113	"And if anyone (*aḥad*) from among the idolaters seeks your protection, then give him protection, that he might hear the word of God"
9:70	36 n.58	"but God was surely not one to wrong them; rather, it was they who wronged themselves"
9:78	230 n.12	"the One with full knowledge of unseen matters" (*ʿallām al-ghuyūb*)
9:94	230 n.11	"Knower of the unseen and the seen" (*ʿālim al-ghayb wa-l-shahāda*)
9:105	230 n.11	"Knower of the unseen and the seen" (*ʿālim al-ghayb wa-l-shahāda*)
Yūnus		
10:24	24 n.7	"Thus do We explain the signs in detail for a people who reflect (*yatafakkarūn*)"
10:92	212 n.107	"This day shall We save you [Pharaoh] in your body (*bi-badanika*) [i.e., preserve your corpse] so that you might be a sign for those [who come] after you"
Hūd		
11:1	99 n.76	"a Book whose verses have been made firm (*uḥkimat*)"
11:18–19	175 n.118	"(18) And who does greater wrong than one who fabricates a lie against God? They will be brought before their Lord, and the witnesses will say, 'These are the ones who lied against their Lord.' Behold! The curse of God is upon the wrongdoers, (19) those who divert from the way of God and seek to make it crooked and who disbelieve in the hereafter." (*SQ*, with modifications)
11:19	176 n.119	
11:29	24 n.8	"but I [Noah] see that you are an ignorant people (*qawman tajhalūn*)"
11:49	234	"That is from the news of the unseen (*anbāʾ al-ghayb*) that We reveal unto you (O Muḥammad)"
11:101	36 n.58	"And We wronged them not, but they wronged themselves"

Yūsuf

12:1	182 n.8	"These are the verses of the clear Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*)"
12:36	218 n.113	"And two young men entered the prison with him [Joseph]. One of them (*aḥaduhumā*) said, 'Truly, I see myself [in a dream] pressing wine'"
12:41	218 n.113	"As for the one of you (*aḥadukumā*), he will give his master wine to drink"
12:102	234 n.27	"That is from the news of the unseen (*anbāʾ al-ghayb*) that We reveal unto you (O Muḥammad)"

al-Raʿd

13:3	24 n.7	"Verily in that are signs for a people who reflect (*yatafakkarūn*)"
13:5	234 n.28	"Shall we indeed be [raised] in a new creation (*khalqin jadīd*)?" (SQ)
13:9	230 n.11	"Knower of the unseen and the seen" (*ʿālim al-ghayb wa-l-shahāda*)

Ibrāhīm

14:2–3	175 n.118	"(2) God, unto whom belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth. Woe to the disbelievers for a severe punishment, (3) those who prefer the life of this world over the hereafter and who divert from the way of God and seek to make it crooked; it is they who are far astray." (SQ, with modifications)
14:3	176 n.119	
14:4	179, 219, 224	"And never did We send a messenger except [that he spoke] in the language of his people (*bi-lisāni qawmihi*), that he might explain to them clearly"
14:19	234 n.28	"If He willed, He would do away with you and bring [in your place] a new creation (*yaʾti bi-khalqin jadīd*)"

al-Ḥijr

15:1	182 n.8	"These are the verses of the Book and a clear Qurʾān (*Qurʾān mubīn*)"

al-Naḥl

16:11	24 n.7	"Verily in that is a sign for a people who reflect (*yatafakkarūn*)"
16:33	36 n.58	"And God wronged them not; rather, it was they who wronged themselves"
16:36	219 n.120	"And We indeed sent unto every community a messenger [who said], 'Worship God and shun false deities!' Then among them were those whom God guided; and among them were those who were deserving of error" (SQ with modifications)
16:44	2 n.3, 24 n.7	"and that perchance they may reflect" (*wa-laʿallahum yatafakkarūn*)
16:50	203 n.74	"They fear their Lord above them (*min fawqihim*), and they do as they are commanded"
16:51	219 n.120	"And God said, 'Take not two gods. Verily, He is but one God (*ilāhun wāḥid*), so fear Me'"
16:69	24 n.7	"Verily in that is a sign for a people who reflect (*yatafakkarūn*)"
16:74	24 n.8, 25 n.11	"Verily, God knows and you know not"
16:78	24 n.8	"And God brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers not knowing anything"
16:89	25 n.15	"And We sent down unto you the Book as a clarification of all things (*tibyānan li-kulli shayʾ*)"
16:103	182 n.8	"and this is a clear Arabic tongue (*lisān ʿarabī mubīn*)"
16:118	36 n.58	"And We wronged them not; rather, it was they who wronged themselves"

al-Isrāʾ

17:36	174	“And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge”
17:46	219 n.120	“And whenever you mention your Lord alone (*waḥdahu*) in the Qurʾān, they turn their backs in aversion” (SQ, with modifications)
17:49	234 n.28	“Shall we indeed be resurrected as a new creation (*khalqan jadīdan*)?”
17:85	24 n.5, 24 n.10, 282	“Say, ‘The soul (*rūḥ*) is of the affair of my Lord, and you have been given of knowledge but little’ ”
17:98	234 n.28	“Shall we indeed be resurrected as a new creation (*khalqan jadīdan*)?”

al-Kahf

18:1	176 n.119	“Praise be to God who sent down the Book upon His servant and placed therein no crookedness”
18:22	218 n.113	“and ask not any one (*aḥadan*) among them about them [i.e., their number]”
18:26	218 n.113	“and He makes no one (*aḥadan*) a partner unto Him in His judgement” (SQ)
18:32	218 n.113	“And set forth for them the parable of two men: For one of them (*aḥadihimā*) We made two gardens of grapevines” (SQ)
18:45	36 n.59	“And God has power over all things”
18:49	36 n.58, 218 n.113	“And your Lord does wrong unto none” (*wa-lā yaẓlimu rabbuka aḥadan*)
18:56	174, 175 n.114	“And those who disbelieve dispute with vain argument in order to confute therewith the truth”
18:110	218 n.113	“and [let him] make no one (*aḥadan*) a partner unto his Lord in worship” (SQ)

Maryam

19:65	145	“Have you knowledge of anything like unto Him?”

Ṭā Hā

20:5	145, 191, 295	“The Most Merciful has settled upon the throne” (*al-Raḥmānu ʿalā l-ʿarsh istawā*)
20:88	212 n.107	“So he brought forth for them a calf [consisting of] a body (*jasadan*) that lowed”
20:110	145	“And they encompass Him not in knowledge” (SQ)
20:123–126	175 n.113	“(123) He [God] said, ‘Get down from it, both of you together, each of you an enemy to the other. And if guidance should come unto you from Me, then whosoever follows My guidance shall not go astray, nor be wretched. (124) But whosoever turns away from the remembrance of Me, truly his shall be a miserable life, and We shall raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection.’ (125) He will say, ‘My Lord! Why have You raised me blind, when I used to see?’ (126) He [God] will say, ‘Thus it is. Our signs came to you, but you forgot them. Even so, this day shall you be forgotten!’ ” (SQ, with modifications)

al-Anbiyāʾ

21:8	212 n.107	“And We did not make them [the Messengers] bodies (*jasadan*) that ate not food, nor were they immortal” (SQ, with modifications)

al-Mu’minūn

23:92	230 n.11	“Knower of the unseen and the seen” (*ʿālim al-ghayb wa-l-shahāda*)
23:117	219 n.120	“And whosoever calls upon another god along with God, for which he has no proof, his reckoning is with God” (SQ)

al-Nūr

24:19	24 n.8, 25 n.11	“And God knows and you know not”

al-Furqān

25:1	25 n.13	“Blessed is He who revealed the Criterion (*al-Furqān*) to His servant, that he might be a warner unto the worlds”
25:33	187 n.20	“And they come not to you (O Muḥammad) with any parable but that We bring you the truth and a better explanation (*aḥsana tafsīran*)”
25:63	24 n.8	“And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk on the earth humbly, and when the ignorant ones address them, they say, ‘Peace!’ ”

al-Shuʿarā’

26:2	182 n.8	“These are the verses of the clear Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*)”
26:195	182 n.8	“in a clear Arabic tongue (*lisān ʿarabī mubīn*)”

al-Naml

27:1	182 n.8	“These are the verses of the Qur’ān and a clear Book (*kitāb mubīn*)”
27:16–44	232 n.17	[Extended account of the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba]
27:55	24 n.8	“Nay, but you are an ignorant people (*qawmun tajhalūn*)!” (SQ)
27:65	234 n.26	“Say, ‘None in the heavens and the earth know the unseen (*al-ghayb*) save God, and they perceive not when they will be resurrected’ ”

al-Qaṣaṣ

28:2	182 n.8	“These are the verses of the clear Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*)”
28:26	218 n.113	“One of them (*f.*) (*iḥdāhumā*) said, ‘O father! Hire him [Moses]’ ”
28:27	218 n.113	“Indeed, I wish to marry you [Moses] to one of (*iḥdā*) these two daughters of mine”

al-ʿAnkabūt

29:40	36 n.58	“And God was surely not one to wrong them; rather, it was they who wronged themselves”

al-Rūm

30:9	36 n.58	“And God was surely not one to wrong them; rather, it was they who wronged themselves”
30:21	24 n.7	“Verily in that are signs for a people who reflect (*yatafakkarūn*)”
30:30	260 n.115	“So set thy face to the religion as a *ḥanīf*, [in] the primordial nature from God upon which He originated mankind (*fiṭrat Allāhi llatī faṭara l-nāsa ʿalayhā*)—there is no altering the creation of God; that is the upright religion, but most men know not” (SQ, with modifications)

al-Sajda

32:6	230 n.11	“Knower of the unseen and the seen” (*ʿālim al-ghayb wa-l-shahāda*)
32:10	234 n.28	“Shall we indeed be [raised] in a new creation (*khalqin jadīd*)?”

al-Aḥzāb

33:27	36 n.59	“And God has power over all things”

Sabaʾ

34:7	234 n.28	“that you shall be [raised] in a new creation (*khalqin jadīd*)”
34:48	230 n.12	“the One with full knowledge of unseen matters” (*ʿallām al-ghuyūb*)

Fāṭir

35:10	145, 203 n.74	“To Him ascends the goodly word and He raises up righteous deeds”
35:16	234 n.28	“If He willed, He would do away with you and bring [in your place] a new creation (*yaʾti bi-khalqin jadīd*)”
35:44	36 n.59	“Truly, He is all-knowing, all-powerful”

Yā Sīn

36:68	2 n.1	“Will they not then understand?” (*a-fa-lā yaʿqilūn*)
36:69	182 n.8	“It is but a reminder and a clear Qurʾān (*Qurʾān mubīn*)”

al-Ṣāffāt

37:35–36	219 n.120	“(35) Indeed, whenever it was said to them, ‘There is no god but God,’ they would wax arrogant (36) and say, ‘Shall we abandon our gods on account of a mad poet?’”

Ṣād

38:5	219 n.120	“‘Did he make the gods (just) one God (*ilāhan wāḥidan*)? Indeed, that is a thing most strange!’”
38:34	212 n.107	“And We indeed tried Solomon, and We cast a body (*jasadan*) [i.e., a corpse] upon his throne, then he repented”
38:36	232 n.17	“So We made the wind subject to him [Solomon], blowing gently at his command whersoever he willed”

al-Zumar

39:9	24 n.6	“Say, ‘Are those who know equal to those who know not?’”
39:42	24 n.7	“Verily in that are signs for a people who reflect (*yatafakkarūn*)”
39:45	219 n.120	“And whenever God alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who believe not in the hereafter recoil (in disgust); but whenever those besides Him are mentioned, behold, they rejoice”
39:46	230 n.11	“Knower of the unseen and the seen” (*ʿālim al-ghayb wa-l-shahāda*)
39:64	24 n.8	“Say, ‘Is it something other than God that you bid me worship, O ignorant ones?’”
39:71	175 n.113	“And those who disbelieve will be driven unto Hell in throngs, till when they reach it, its gates will be opened and its keepers will say unto them, ‘Did not messengers from among you come to you, reciting unto you the signs of your Lord and warning you of the meeting with this your day?’ They will say, ‘Yea, indeed!’ But the word of punishment has come due for the disbelievers” (*SQ*)

Ghāfir

40:4	175 n.114	“None but those who disbelieve dispute concerning the signs of God, so let it not delude thee that they are free to come and go in the land” (*SQ*)
40:5	175 n.114	“And they disputed with vain argument in order therewith to confute the truth, so I [God] took them to account; [see,] then, how My punishment was”

Fuṣṣilat		
41:29	203 n.75	“we shall put them under our feet so that they may be among the lowliest (*min al-asfalīn*)”
41:40	193 n.50	“Truly those who deviate (*yulḥidūn*) with regard to Our signs [i.e., revealed verses] are not hidden from Us” (SQ)
41:46	36 n.58, 210 n.96	“And your Lord is in no wise unjust to [His] slaves”
41:53	166	“We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth”
al-Shūrā		
42:11	99 n.77, 145, 210 n.97	“There is none like unto Him (*laysa ka-mithlihi shayʾ*), and He is the all-hearing, all-seeing”
al-Zukhruf		
43:2	182 n.8	“By the clear Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*)!”
43:42	36 n.59	“for truly, We have power over them”
43:45	219 n.120	“And ask those of Our messengers whom We sent before you: Did We appoint gods to be worshipped besides the Most Merciful?”
43:76	36 n.58	“And We wronged them not; rather, it is they who were the wrongdoers”
al-Dukhān		
44:2	182 n.8	“By the clear Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*)!”
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Muḥammad		
47:24	2 n.2	“Do they not consider (*yatadabbarūn*) the Qurʾān (with care), or are there locks upon [their] hearts?”
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49:6	24 n.8	“lest you harm a people out of ignorance (*bi-jahāla*)”
Qāf		
50:15	234 n.28	“Nay, but they are in doubt regarding a new creation (*khalqin jadīd*)” (SQ)
al-Qamar		
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59:22	230 n.11	“Knower of the unseen and the seen” (*ʿālim al-ghayb wa-l-shahāda*)

al-Mumtaḥana		
60:4	219 n.120	“There is indeed a beautiful example for you in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people, ‘Truly we are quit of you and of all that you worship apart from God. We have rejected you, and enmity and hatred have arisen between us and you forever, till you believe in God alone’” (SQ)
al-Jumuʿa		
62:8	230 n.11	“Knower of the unseen and the seen” (*ʿālim al-ghayb wa-l-shahāda*)
al-Munāfiqūn		
63:4	212 n.107	“And when you see them, their bodies (*ajsāmuhum*) impress you”
al-Taghābun		
64:18	230 n.11	“Knower of the unseen and the seen” (*ʿālim al-ghayb wa-l-shahāda*)
al-Ṭalāq		
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al-Mulk		
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67:8–9	175 n.113	“(8) … Whenever a group is cast therein [i.e., in hell], its keepers ask them, ‘Did not a warner come unto you?’ (9) They say, ‘Indeed, a warner came unto us, but we denied him and said: God did not send anything down; you are in naught but great error.’” (SQ)
67:16–17	203 n.74	“(16) Do you feel secure that He who is in the heavens (*fī al-samāʾ*) will not cause the earth to engulf you while it churns? (17) Or do you feel secure that He who is in the heavens will not unleash a torrent of stones upon you? Soon shall you know how My warning is.” (SQ, with modifications)
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